

ENHANCING READING ACHIEVEMENT OF GRADE TWO
STUDENTS: A PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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M. BELLE SPARKES BUTT



ENHANCING READING ACHIEVEMENT OF GRADE TWO
STUDENTS: A PROGRAM FOR PARENTS

by

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requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of an interactive reading program on children's reading achievement. This program involved parents of grade two children. Its intent was to train parents how to help more effectively their children with reading. The program was based on the findings of past research on parental involvement in literacy development of children, including revealed parent-child interactions and techniques of parental involvement. Its effectiveness was determined by comparing gains made in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary by an experimental and a control group.

A pretest-midtest-posttest-follow-up test control group design with matching was used for this research. From a population of 80 grade two students, seven pairs were matched on the basis of reading ability, socio-economic status, gender and age. One member of each pair was then randomly assigned to the experimental group; the other was placed in the control group. A series of one way ANOVAS conducted on group scores and each of the three dependent variables at pretest time confirmed the soundness of this design.

Both groups of students continued to receive regular classroom instruction. Only children in the experimental group were exposed to the assistance program, or treatment.

By midtest time, the impact of the program on reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary was found to be in the hypothesized direction; by posttest time it was statistically significant at the 0.1 level. Three months after the program terminated, the follow-up test results indicated that its impact was still significant at the 0.1 level on sight vocabulary; however, its impact on reading comprehension and receptive vocabulary had become significant at the 0.01 level.

Provisions were also made to discover effects the program had on children's attitude towards reading, and to determine parents' reactions to the program. It was found that the program apparently was significant in increasing children's desire to read. Parents also reported a very positive response to it.

The program, in summary, proved to be successful in helping parents develop the "know how" to enhance the reading levels of their children and to develop in them an increasing desire to read. As a result, the findings of the study should have important implications for educators and parents who are concerned about children's reading achievement and solving our serious illiteracy problem.

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Dedicated to

my father

John C. Sparkes

whose memory lives on

and

who always believed in me

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Because reading permeates the entire school curriculum, the ability to read is basic to academic success in school. As a result, "learning to read is considered by parents, teachers and the general public to be the most important educational objective for children" (Silvern, 1983, p.44). Because the obvious and generally accepted role of the primary school is to promote and develop the foundation for later learning, the role of primary school teachers in developing able readers cannot be over-emphasized.

Despite the highly accepted significance of literacy and the considerable emphasis given to reading instruction by primary teachers, however, illiteracy remains one of the greatest problems in our society (Sutherland, 1993). A survey published by Statistics Canada (1991) revealed a gloomy picture with respect to literacy skills of Canadians, especially Newfoundlanders. It estimated that 16% of Canadians and 24% of Newfoundlanders in the 16 to 69 age range are functioning at the lowest level of reading proficiency, having reading skills too limited to deal with everyday reading demands; 22% of Canadians and 36% of Newfoundlanders have abilities enabling them to deal only with simple texts; 62% of Canadians and only 39% of Newfoundlanders have reading skills sufficient to meet most everyday reading requirements.

This survey concluded that literacy skills vary by province and are weaker in rural areas; however, Newfoundland registers the lowest skill levels for Canadians.

In our knowledge-based society, literacy is basic to both individual and social progress. It is now as important to our economy as roads, ports and airports were in the fifties and sixties (Sutherland, 1993). Because it forms the basis for the well-educated and well-trained workforce so necessary in our highly technological world, literacy development is becoming central to our survival as a nation (Durkin, 1994). Referring to these gloomy statistics on literacy in our nation and province and its crucial importance to our economy, Sutherland stated, "These are the hard facts and they reveal a horrific problem. Illiteracy and low levels of literacy are the main barriers to stable economic growth, productivity, and full employment in this province, and elsewhere" (p.24).

The disempowerment that permeates the lives of those who are illiterate is usually devastating to them and very costly to society. Many join the ranks of the unemployed and become welfare recipients. With their self-esteem bruised and battered, many become engaged in acts of crime. Sixty percent of prisoners in Canada and the United States, for example, have been found to be functionally illiterate (Doake, 1987). As society becomes more knowledge based, such problems compound.

Sutherland said that solving our serious illiteracy problem will require wisdom. This researcher maintains that the solution lies more with common sense. It simply means putting into practice what research has been telling us for decades and that is for schools to seek greater partnerships with parents in literacy development. As Rasinski (1994) claimed, "Getting parents involved in their children's literacy development ... holds the greatest potential for positively affecting children's reading" (p.31). This, he said, is more important than adopting new approaches to reading within schools, such as "whole language". It is encouraging to see that many schools throughout this country are beginning to adopt this research-based practice.

Expecting the primary school to develop basic literacy skills in all its pupils in a relatively short time frame may be unreasonable. This is especially true today when the primary school curriculum is rapidly becoming overcrowded as each discipline requires more of this "prime time" for learning and as schools are rapidly becoming over-burdened with their increasingly difficult task of trying to meet the demands of an exceedingly diverse and highly technological society. Most primary children are exposed to formal schooling only three to five hours per day for only 187 days per year. They are usually with their parents for much of the remaining time. Hurd (1994) claimed, "From birth to age 18,

children spend less than 10% of their time in school" (P.12). Tapping parental time and energy to assist teachers in the promotion and development of literacy makes practical sense. It also makes logical sense.

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children (Becher, 1982; Larsen, 1982). In terms of time, they are the teachers children usually have the longest. Research has shown conclusively that parental influence over their children is greater than that exerted by teachers (Teal, 1978; Topping, 1984; Silvern, 1985). More specifically, the crucial role parents play in the development of their children's intelligence, competence and overall achievement is well established by research (Becher, 1986).

Research also confirms that one of the most important influences parents have on the general educability of their children is in the area of literacy development (Williams, 1982). It has shown that early readers come from homes where children were read to, reading was valued and modelled and plenty of reading materials were available (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1979; Tizard et al., 1982; Doake, 1987). Studies have also found that parents' listening to children read has powerful effects on early reading achievement (Hansen, 1979; Teale, 1978; Wells, 1978; Hewison & Tizard, 1980).

Being the most "significant others" in the lives of their young children, usually places parents in a more advantageous

position as teachers of their children than regular school teachers, especially when consideration is given to the fact that love and understanding are basic to effective teaching of young children (Buchanan, 1986). Besides, the close and prolonged association and the strong sense of identification resulting from family ties are usually mutual. It enables parents to facilitate more effectively the child's linking the unknown with the known, a process essential for learning, and literacy and cognitive development (Neuman and Gallagher, 1994). Being able to work one-to-one in such familiar, warm, intimate and natural settings should give parents quite an edge over regular teachers, who usually have to work with twenty or more children (Lancy and Nattiv, 1992).

Research also shows a high correlation between low socio-economic background and failure in reading and education in general (Bruinsma, 1978; Wells, 1986). Language in such an environment is usually "restricted" and not conducive to facilitating reading readiness (Bruinsma, 1978). Suitable models to entice children to like reading are restricted (Doake, 1987). With limited needs for literacy in their everyday lives, parents from such environments may not interact with their children in ways that nurture early literacy. Such environments are also usually deprived of children's literature. The result is the establishment of an

apparent serious intergenerational illiteracy cycle (Neuman and Gallagher, 1994).

Newfoundland has the highest unemployment and poverty rates in Canada; consequently, Newfoundlanders generally have a relatively low socio-economic status (Sutherland, 1993). The need to develop parent assistant programs to emphasize the nurturing of literacy development in culturally deprived environments and break the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy is great in this country. It would seem to be greater in this province than any other in Canada.

Some teachers, however, are reluctant to involve parents in teaching their children to read. They feel that most parents, especially those of low socio-economic status, will not participate because they place little value on education. Contrary to such traditional views, however, studies have shown that parents of low socio-economic status sustain a high level of involvement in school-initiated activities and are pleased to cooperate in helping their children learn to read (Beveridge & Jerrams, 1981; Teale, 1984; Weinberger, et al. 1986; Neuman and Gallagher, 1994). The same research found that such parents lack the "know how" of helping their children with reading. What such parents need, therefore, is education.

This seems to be a very serious problem not only with parents of low socio-economic backgrounds but with most

parents. Many want to help but report uncertainty regarding the amount of time and the types of practices required to optimize the benefits of reading to their children. (Silvern, 1985). Many are unaware of the important role they can and do play (Larsen, 1982). Because they do not know how to help, some resort to using programs advertised in the media which are of a dubious value (Rasinski, 1994). In their eagerness to help their children read, many parents resort to using traditional school materials, such as workbooks, flashcards and ditto sheets to promote a "skills-drill approach" to literacy. Such an approach conflicts with the current literature and research findings on learning how to read and can lead to negative attitudes towards reading (Schwartz, 1991). Rather than use praise for efforts made and feed their children's minds, some parents push them beyond their capabilities. This leads to dismal failure (Topping, 1986). Schools add further to parental confusion by changing reading programs every two or three years (Bialostok, 1992).

It is therefore not surprising that when parents become involved in home-school assistance programs designed to inform and instruct them about the teaching of reading, the results have been significant increases in the reading attitudes and achievement of their children (Silvern, 1985). Such programs have been found to be especially effective with low income parents (Becher, 1982). Research has also shown that they

have resulted in improved parental attitudes towards school and better teacher performance (Rasinski and Fredericks, 1989). The end product of such parental involvement, therefore, is more effective schools with students, parents, and society in general benefiting (Durkin, 1994).

In an increasingly knowledge-based and technological world community, our country's economy and indeed whole social fabric is being threatened by an enduring illiteracy problem. This problem is most acute in this province. The most obvious and logical solution lies in training parents to become more effectively involved in their children's literacy development. The home and school are integral parts of the same learning environment and learning to read is simply an outcome of the child's natural experience with written language in the home which the school extends (Doake, 1986). Besides, parents have the right, the responsibility and are generally more strategically positioned than are regular school teachers to influence their children's education. Some have the expertise and are quite effective; however, most want to get involved but do not know how. Research shows that regular school teachers can effectively show them how. Because the early years of a child's life is the prime time for learning, especially literacy learning, the need for primary teachers to do this is crucial.

This researcher contends that considerable money, time and energy have been expended on special educational services and remedial and individualized programs in attempts to cure illiteracy in schools and resulting failure and drop-out problems. This researcher also maintains that instead of getting at the root of the problem; however, such measures have been mostly superficial, patchwork attempts at resolution. It is time emphasis was placed on prevention of these problems. In this respect, the individual and social dividends that could result from developing well planned parent-teacher programmes to promote literacy development during children's prime time for learning could indeed be great.

The Problem

Illiteracy is an extremely serious problem in this province. Primary teachers do not have sufficient time to develop adequately the basic skill of reading in all their students. Being the first and most influential teachers of their children, parents are in the position to provide valuable assistance to primary teachers in developing able readers. Besides, both home and school are integral parts of the same learning environment. Many parents are asked to provide assistance; most want to help and many try to help. The problem is most either do not know how to help or are

unsure if they are helping or hindering their children with the reading process. This study will attempt to design a reading program to assist parents in developing and implementing the expertise, procedures and activities to help their children become better readers.

Rationale for the Study

Research shows that the two most effective practices parents can engage in to promote literacy development in their children are reading to them and listening to them read (Silvern, 1985). Studies have also demonstrated that the effectiveness of each of these practices depends significantly on the quality of the parent-child interactions (Flood, 1977; Teale, 1978). This study intends to focus on high quality interactive practices parents can engage in while helping children with reading. Hopefully, the findings of past research in this area will be reinforced or extended.

Research has refuted the traditional view most parents have about reading to children. That is, children should be quiet and listen to the story as it is being read. To the contrary, studies have found that the children who talked about the books and the stories they heard read and asked questions before, during and after the reading process performed significantly higher on reading tasks and acquired more highly developed and expanded concepts than those

children who did not (Flood, 1977; Smith, 1971; Snow, 1983; Teale, 1978).

Educators also maintain that extended parent-child interactions involving questioning, responding, discussing and exchanging ideas are just as important in listening to children read (Pickering, 1977; Athey, 1983; Rasinski, 1991). Such high quality interactions, they suggest, aid development in skills of critical thinking, comprehension and inferencing. Research also indicates that parents of children who achieve well in reading very actively guide the development of this process and engage in such high quality interactions (Hansen, 1969; Teale, 1978; Wells, 1978).

Reading specialists also maintain that getting children to sample, predict, confirm and self-correct where necessary, facilitates children's attempts at reading, including the development of independent readers (Smith, 1982; Goodman, 1986). Using praise and encouragement in the process gives further support (Silvern, 1985; Topping, 1978).

Such extended interactions provide scaffolding to help children respond successfully to what they are trying to do in the reading process and that is to extract meaning from the text (Flood, 1977). Responding to the child's needs contingently by answering the child's questions would seem to be the most effective type of parent-child interaction. It is individualizing instruction in reading in its truest form

(Teale, 1978). Studies of early readers (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976) showed that one of the most important things parents did for them was answer their questions about reading.

This study has two main purposes. The first is to develop and implement a program of extended interactive practices which are research based that would show parents how to effectively participate in parent-child book readings and support their attempts to do this. In addition to "listening activities", this program will include a series of "cognitive activities". Besides being actively involved in reading themselves and being read to by parents, students will be encouraged to discuss and ask questions and make predictions, confirmations and self-corrections about their favourite books and also answer a variety of questions asked by parents. Praise will be given throughout for efforts made.

The second purpose is to attempt to determine the effectiveness of this interactive program on reading achievement. Towards this end, standardized tests will be given and comparisons of results will be made to determine whether children of parents exposed to the program made greater gains in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary than children of parents not exposed.

Secondary to these aims, this study also intends to assess the effects of this interactive program on children of differing ability and gender. Also, attempts will be made to

ascertain what effects the program had on children's attitudes and interests towards reading. Finally, parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the program will be analyzed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Parental Involvement in Education

The role of parents in both the informal and formal education of their children has become an issue of increasing concern and intense interest to educators, researchers, politicians and parents. These groups have been giving increased recognition to the fact that parents not only have a tremendous impact on the education of their children but also the right and responsibility to become involved. This action has been spurred on by the recognition that parents play a crucial role "in establishing the educability of their children, facilitating their development and achievement, and remedying educational and developmental problems (Becher, 1986, p. 85).

As creators of the home environment parents are usually the first and the most important teachers of their children (Becher, 1982, Larsen, 1982). Their role as teachers begins when the child is born. Before the child comes to school, incidental instruction takes place in such processes as eating, toilet-training, walking, listening, singing, speaking, reading books, modelling, problem solving and broadening experiences (Laite, 1990). Such instruction involving more progressively complex processes usually

continues after the child begins school and sometimes beyond school-leaving age.

Larsen (1982) claimed that because self-concept emerges through interactions with significant others and the early years are crucial for developing concepts about self, parents have a prime responsibility in the development of positive self-concepts of their children. Jones (1990) emphasized that because a positive self-concept is a crucial prerequisite for success as a student and a human being, an extremely important role parents can play in the education of their children is the development of this fundamental basis.

After reviewing research on parental involvement in education in general and reading in particular, Silvern (1985) concluded, "Extensive evidence is available establishing the crucial role parents play in the general development and education of their children" (p.49). Jencks (1972) found that family background accounts for about half of the variation in educational attainment among school children (cited in Berger, 1987). More specifically, Becher (1982) concluded that the crucial role parents play in the development of their children's intelligence, competence and achievement is well established.

Using the review of research on parental involvement in informal education in the home and formal education in the school conducted by Anne Henderson (1988), Rasinski and

Fredericks (1989) reached the following three very significant conclusions:

First, studies have demonstrated that providing a home environment that is conducive to learning has a strong effect on student achievement. This includes parents having high expectations for their children and helping to foster positive attitudes toward learning. Second, getting parents involved in the educational programs of the school also resulted in positive outcomes. Parents developed better attitudes toward their schools, teachers worked to improve their instruction, and student performance in the academic areas increased. Third, schools that maintained high levels of student achievement had high levels of parental and community support and involvement. Hence, comprehensive parental involvement is seen as critical to the academic success of the school as a whole (p. 84).

The notion of parents as educators is certainly not a new one. As Keith J. Topping (1986) stated, "there is a sense in which parents acting as educators must be a phenomenon as old as human culture itself". As a result, Topping added, "the development of formalised education in schools served largely to rob parents of a function they had carried out for millennia" (p.1).

Reports of parents acting as teachers of their children go back to seventeenth century Europe; however, documentation of initiatives of parental involvement in schooling does not occur until the first decade of the twentieth century in both England and the United States (Herwig, 1982). The first attempts toward organization of parents as educators in the United States occurred in 1897 when The Congress of Parents

and Teachers formed a PTA (Berger, 1983). The first attempts toward organization in Canada apparently took place in 1927 when national organizations to promote parental involvement in education were formed in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario (Durkin, 1994). One of the earliest attempts of researching this topic occurred in the United Kingdom in 1947 when W. D. Wall analyzed the views of 262 headteachers on parent-teacher co-operation (Topping, 1986).

Modern theories about parents as educators began around the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries with concepts developed by John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, their thoughts on the role of parents in early child development were expanded and nurtured by Heinrich Pestalozzi, the "Father of Parent Education" and Friedrich Froebel, the "Father of Kindergarten". By the mid-1800's, their ideas were disseminated throughout the United States by people such as Elizabeth Peabody, Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, the father of the kindergarten movement in the United States (Berger, 1983).

Modern practices of parental involvement in formal education in the United States were given great impetus by the prosperity of the 1920's with parent education programs, preschools and nursery schools springing up in many parts of the country. The emphasis at this time was on health

education and suggested child rearing practices. Despite the depression of the 1930's, the war of the 1940's and the aftermath of the 1950's, parental practices in formal education continued to grow. The prevailing view, however, was still one in which the teacher was seen as the professional and the parent as a supporter and fundraiser. By the 1960's, with the advent of Piaget's theories of cognitive development, many parents, educators and politicians began to press for greater parental involvement in education (Berger, 1983).

According to the flood of literature since the mid-1970's on the topic of parents as educators, the intensity in interest and concern on this topic, especially among educators, took a major leap around this time (Becher, 1982; Topping, 1986). Since then, increased emphasis has been given to the realization that many parents do not have the skills, knowledge or confidence to teach their children as effectively as they should and would like. The fact that some parents are unaware that they are or should be teachers of their children has also been given more concern (Larsen, 1982). Besides, research began to show that parents are generally eager for teacher-initiated involvement in education (Epstein, 1986; Ziegler, 1987). This has resulted in increased emphasis on training parents to become better teachers of their children.

Research on such training programs showed that children whose parents are trained to work with them performed higher on intelligence tests and language performance than did children whose parents were not trained. Moreover, parents who were trained showed significant positive changes in their teaching styles, interactions with their children and providing a more stimulating home learning environment (Becher, 1982). In concluding her review of research on this topic, Becher stated, "it can be said with confidence that parent education programs are effective in teaching parents, particularly low-income parents, how to help their children avoid or remedy basic cognitive and school achievement deficiencies" (p.1381).

Such research findings seemed to stimulate more activity among educators on how to work with difficult parents, or how to reach the "unreachable". The philosophy emerged that:

Because we care about all children and want what is best for them, we must be willing to give of ourselves and make special efforts to reach parents that in the past, we would have given up on because they were "unreachable" (Rundall and Smith, 1982, p. 84).

Within the past third of a century, parental involvement in formal education has increasingly been given state support in countries such as Britain, the United States and Canada. In Britain this move was given great impetus by The Plowden Report of 1967, The Bullock Report of 1975 and The Warnock

Report of 1978 (Wolfendale, 1985). These reports emphasized that, "Optimization of children's developmental and learning potential is a realistic goal only if parents are involved in the formal processes of education and the delivery of child services "(Wolfendale, 1983, p.7). In 1977 the Taylor Report recommended that half of school governing bodies in Britain be composed of parents (Topping, 1986).

In the United States, government support for involving parents in schooling took a major leap in 1965 with the opening of the first Head Start center. This marked the beginning of a federally funded program that "mandated parental involvement and thus became the first large-scale effort to involve parents in the educational experiences of their children" (Herwig, 1982, p. 7). It focused on the fact that deprived home environments, including poor parenting, result in children becoming disadvantaged intellectually and socially which in turn leads to underachievement in schooling. One of its aims was to educate parents of low income families toward better parenting. As a result, parents were encouraged to visit classrooms and observe programs being taught. It was based on the philosophy that the direct involvement of parents in schooling can foster their children's education (Laite, 1990).

The significance of parental involvement in their children's education became increasingly implicit in

legislation in the United States during the 1970's. In 1974, Public Law 93-380 required that advisory councils consisting of a majority of parents be established for school districts. In 1975, legislation was passed requiring parental involvement in policy making for handicapped children (Topping, 1986). Later, the United States Elementary and Secondary Education Act included the requirement that the planning of federally funded education programs involve parents; otherwise, funding will not be granted (Laite, 1990).

Like many other phenomena, events involving parents in the education of their children that occurred south of the border quickly diffused into Canada with the establishment of Day Care and Early Intervention Programs throughout the country (Sharp, 1976). These programs have been established on the belief that they provide a continuity of educational support for children since home and school are seen as being integral parts of the same learning environment.

By early 1980's, however, some writers in the United States and Britain began to have serious concerns over the lag between theory and practice in involving parents in their children's education. Summarizing this concern over the rate of acceleration of change, Topping (1986) wrote:

Despite the great upsurge of interest in parents as educators, and the development of many new initiatives of proven worth, it seems that there are still many parts of the school system the news has yet to reach. Even where change in teachers'

attitudes is achieved, behaviour change may be slow to follow (p. 3).

He further stated, "not all legislation has worked well in practice, and some of the intended effects have not materialised" (p.17).

Several writers have researched causes for this disparity between intent and actual commitment. Becher (1986) stated lack of interest on the part of both parents and teachers and fear and uncertainty by teachers in parental involvement as real causes. Topping (1986) claimed that teachers see parents as amateurs in education and resent amateur encroachment on their professional territory. Becher (1986) stated that evidence from literature and experience points to the fact that many parents do not know or are uncertain about the positive influences they have on their children's development and education. Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) enumerated three causes for the problem. First, teachers are too busy to initiate parental involvement programs. Second, a mutual mistrust often exists between teachers and parents and this acts as a deterrent to establishing effective programs. Third, past failures in trying to involve parents beget failures in future attempts. Jones (1990) claimed that most parents perceive their role as teachers to end once their children begin school.

Despite the numerous difficulties in transforming commitments into practice, however, the accumulating research on the positive impact of parents' involvement in the education of their children caused interest and support for this issue to continue growing (Becher, 1986). The expansion of government support since the late 1980's has been a main cause for increased parental involvement in recent years (Durkin, 1994).

Recently, the United States government adopted a long-range plan for parental involvement in early intervention educational programs. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) aims by the year 2000 to have all pre-school children exposed to high quality and developmentally appropriate pre-school programs that help them prepare for school (Handel, 1995). This prompted U.S. Secretary of Education, R. W. Riley to announce a major initiative to involve parents in education and to proclaim that "Thirty years of research tell us that the starting point of American education is parent expectations and parental involvement with their children's education, regardless of their station in life, their income level or their educational background" (p. 9). Part of this major initiative has been the creation of a 21st Century Head Start Program that "serves more children who need it, and serves them better" (Rowe, 1994, p. 4).

Recent educational reforms in Canada have emphasized giving parents greater control in the actual governance of schools. In 1989 British Columbia passed legislation requiring all schools in the province to have a parent's advisory council. Similar legislation was also recently passed in Quebec and Prince Edward Island (Durkin, 1994). In 1990, the Yukon passed legislation giving such councils authority, subject to ministerial approval, over the operations of local schools in the selection of the school principal, approval of school rules, development of local curriculum, and the evaluation and dismissal of teachers. In other provinces, implementation of school councils with strong parental representation is already underway. Nova Scotia has provided for the full transfer of current school board powers to such councils, depending on approval from the Governor in Council (Working Together For Educational Excellence, 1994).

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, Secondary Education (1994) in Newfoundland has outlined what it calls "a new role for parents" through school councils. It states

If the school system is to reach its maximum potential with the resources available, the Commission believes it is essential to establish the means for effective parental involvement in the governance of the province's schools. In many cases, parents already actively support the school, take on a variety of responsibilities, communicate with teachers and other staff, and take on a vigorous interest in the administration and

performance of the school. Within the model proposed in this report the parents would see their former role expanded, formalized and given a genuine authority within the structures of school government (Williams, p.231).

Recently, within the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, a belief has been growing among increasing numbers of parents that they can do a better job than the regular school system in teaching their children. As a result, some parents are taking their children out of the regular school system and teaching them at home. In Canada, for example, these so-called "parents turned teachers" have formed the Canadian Alliance of Home Schoolers and comprise some 3,000 participants across the country (Bell, 1994). They believe the big advantage they have over the regular school system in teaching their children is a greater opportunity to provide the individualized instruction so necessary for student success. They also maintain that the more relaxed pace of home-based education facilitates close relationships and flexible, round-the-clock learning resulting from a wide variety of activities (Bell, 1994).

Kelly Green, who has a background in organizing various forms of co-operative education, offered an interesting compromise between schooling at home and schooling in the regular school system. She said, "In an ideal world I would prefer to see a collaborative, co-operative, effort whereby

children and families could take part in the public education system instead of being subsumed by it" (cited in Bell, 1994, p. 32). An increasingly important role parents perform in this implied partnership is that of teachers of their own children.

Durkin (1994) claimed that schools are finding it increasingly difficult to satisfy the demands made upon them by an exceedingly diverse and highly technological community. Extensive research, she added, points to greater parental participation in education to best meet this challenge. Studies done by numerous government, education and private agencies show that "when parents become involved in the formal educational process,... the student, family and the community benefit in terms of long-term achievement, positive attitudes and behaviour, and more effective schools" (p. 33).

In summary, the issue of parental involvement in the education of their children is far from being new. However, despite the fact that there is extensive and convincing evidence supporting the crucial role parents play in the education of their children and that they can be trained to more effectively perform this role, the practice has not grown rapidly. Since the 1970's, legislation has been increasingly supporting this cause.

The 1970's saw an increase in parental involvement in formal education throughout Britain, the United States and Canada. This consisted largely of fund-raising, assisting

regular school teachers in classroom activities and with low-level menial tasks, such as outings, as well as participation in parent-teacher associations. During the 1980's, these functions continued and the concept of partnership between home and school emerged as parents became more involved in policy decisions; curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation and training programs to help them become effective teachers of their children (Herwig, 1982; Berger, 1983).

As we approach the mid-1990's, we see an increased focus in these past trends, especially a greater emphasis on the partnership between home and school as a formal educational team in a continuing learning environment. Resulting from this partnership are more structured programs of parent training which are skill-oriented and home-based with the aim of increasing attainments of children. Within this partnership, an increasing number of educators are seeing parents as experts on their own children who can provide very significant information for effective decision-making on educational matters concerning these children. They also see that parental skills can complement their own professional skills (Laite, 1990).

To be most effective, teachers should take the leadership role in this partnership with parents and initiate the process of parental involvement. As Potter (1989) said, "We teachers need to go beyond involvement and give due recognition to the

incredibly important role parents play as co-educators of our children" (p. 22). Once the process is in place, teachers should become resource developer, facilitator, counsellor, communicator, director, interpreter and friend to parents (Berger, 1983). This partnership should begin during the child's preschool years since parental help is most influential at this time (Williams, 1982). It should continue until the child finishes school.

Parental Involvement in Reading

Both literature and research provide conclusive evidence that one of the most significant functions parents perform in the education of their children is the development of language and literacy skills (Williams, 1982). Literacy learning has its roots in the home, beginning in infancy with the child's exposure to oral and written language (Goodman and Haussler, 1986; Teale, 1978). Being the most important "significant others" in the young child's life and possessing the advantage of being able to work with the child on one-to-one relationships, parents are strategically positioned to effectively facilitate this process. As the literature suggests, some are good at this; others are not so good; some are complete failures. Hansen (1969) found that it is not who the parents are in terms of socio-economic status as much

as what they do in the home environment that is important to the literacy development of their children.

Parents, Oral Language and Reading

Reading primarily involves deriving meaning from print. Whether the child can derive this meaning depends, to a large extent, upon the knowledge and experiences the child brings to the task. The young child uses language to derive meaningful learning experiences about the environment. As Emery (1975) said, "A word cannot be read (understood) unless the child knows the meaning of that word when presented orally. A speaking vocabulary, therefore, is an essential prerequisite for learning to read" (p.32). Because basic language development is just about complete by the age of five, the first five years is a crucial time in developing a child's ability to read (Bruinsma, 1978). The role of parents in developing this basis for learning to read is therefore crucial. Durkin (1966) and Clark (1978) found that young fluent readers had available to them an interested adult who read to and talked with them and answered their questions.

Bernstein (1961, 1969) showed that parents vary greatly in the ways they use oral language with their children. Some use "restricted" language; others use "elaborated" language (cited in Bruinsma, 1978). The "restricted" code is used for short and simple instructions, demands and responses,

including what one should and should not do. It excludes many possible avenues of learning. The "elaborated" code is used more analytically to seek and give reasons. The child uses it for hypothesis testing and the parent uses it for getting feedback. Parents using the "elaborated" style encourage questions and tend to give explanations while those using the "restricted" code tend to discourage questions and prefer to give instructions.

Because the language of books generally consists of highly "elaborated" language, it would seem logical to assume that the use of "elaborated" language by parents would be more conducive to promoting reading readiness in their children than would their use of "restricted" language. Research supports this hypothesis. Studies by Hess and Shipman (1965) discovered that children coming from "elaborated" language backgrounds had significantly higher intellectual levels than those coming from "restricted" language backgrounds. Clay (1991) and Jones (1990) found that children with high verbal and reading ability come from homes that have rich and varied backgrounds of language experiences. Neuman and Gallagher (1994) concluded, "children are drawn to the uses of written language through participation in social activities that require its cognitive and communicative functions" (p. 398).

Besides supporting the oral language basis for literacy through the context of day-to-day engagements with their children, research identifies several other ways in which parents promote reading readiness, receptivity to reading instruction and increased reading achievement of their children. These practices revolve around uses of the printed word.

Effective Practices

The keys to success in any human endeavour are skill and motivation. Research shows that during the early, formative years of their lives, children experience intense mental growth, are at the height of their imitative powers and possess a strong appetite for words. To a large extent, motivation, or desire, is instilled in us by environmental influences. If we want better readers, it is important that children develop an interest in reading. Reading interest grows when and where people take time to plant and nurture the seed (Trelease, 1985). Parents are the key players in this crucial process. "A parent's job is not so much to teach a child how to read, but to make him [sic] want to read" (Rasinski and Fredericks, 1991).

An increasing number of educators maintain that regular school teachers could learn from the methods used by some parents in teaching reading to their children. Doake (1986)

said, "Teachers would do well to examine in some detail the characteristics of homes which produce children who either learn to read before they go to school or whose learning proceeds with ease when they enter school" (p. 2). He went so far as to state that schools should abandon teacher-oriented and teacher-dominated methods of teaching reading for the naturalistic methods used so successfully by some parents. Morrow (1988) also stated that teachers can learn from the way children learn to read in natural settings outside the school. Dillon (1989) pointed out that most of the literacy advice educators give parents, such as have print in the home, read to children, be good models of reading and answer children's questions was learned from parents in the first place through studies done by people like Dolores Durkin and Gordon Wells. In some cases, it is the parents who are the "literacy experts". Research has identified several parental roles that have been shown to promote children's reading development.

Reading to Children

As early as 1908, Edmund B. Huey said regarding children's learning in school: "It all begins with parents reading to children" (cited in Morrow, 1994 p. 12). "Reading to the child is the best-known, most researched and most frequently recommended parental practice that is significantly related to positive attitudes toward reading and reading

achievement" (Silvern, 1985, p. 44). Doake (1986) pointed out that according to case histories of early readers, many young children learn to read before they come to school. The main determinant of such children's early reading development was they came from homes which were print oriented and had been read to extensively from an early age.

Several educators have expressed their views on why reading to young children by their parents is so motivating for children and so important for literacy. Pickering (1977) said that children respond so positively to this activity because they perceive it to be a tangible sign that the parent truly cares. Schwartz (1991) elaborated further on this view when she said:

I think the first and most basic reason has nothing to do with the literature itself. Rather, it has everything to do with the feelings of love, security, and comfort that the child has learned to associate with being close to the loved one... The positive feelings associated with the person doing the reading become part of the activity itself. Reading, books, pictures, stories, print: they too come to mean love, security and comfort (p. 59).

In the same context, Schwartz suggested that such experiences early in the child's life generally have long-lasting effects and make the child feel good about books and reading for years to come. Reading aloud to children therefore causes children to see books as a source of delight and reading as an enjoyable experience and as a natural part of their existence.

It acts as the magnet that attracts children to books and gets them hooked on reading (Boutcher, 1980).

As children become involved in the highly motivating experience of hearing stories being read to them, they derive several other literacy benefits besides developing an interest in books and reading. Studies have shown that besides introducing children to a variety of language patterns and providing a basis from which they can begin to understand and construct the rules of the reading process and the functions of print, reading to children significantly increases children's listening and speaking vocabularies; letter and symbol recognition abilities; length of spoken sentences; literal and inferential comprehension skills and the number and nature of concepts developed (Durkin, 1966; Hansen, 1969; Teale, 1978). Huck (1977) said that through hearing stories read aloud children begin to develop a sense of story or story schema. Holdaway (1979) pointed out that reading to children develops in them the concepts that print makes sense, and directionality, the idea that print proceeds from left to right and from top to bottom. Hill (1989) concluded that reading to children helps open up their minds to the world, preview books and overcome possible fears of the printed word. Parsons (1993) claimed that reading to children, "sparks the imagination and provides ideas for creative writing" (p.10).

Perhaps the most crucial function reading to children performs is it gives children insight into the more elaborate language of books (Smith, 1982; Holdaway, 1987; Laite, 1990) and bridges the gap between oral and written language (Hill, 1989). Holdaway said that children's "own attempts to reconstruct print into real language must be patterned on the reading they hear. If they hear little, or if what they hear is of a poor quality, their own reading is sure to suffer" (p.17).

Limited research has been done on the topic of how much time should parents spend reading to their children. Studies done by Henry (1974) and Hoskins (1976) indicate that children whose parents read to them on a regular basis (preferably daily) for 8-10 minutes at a time achieve higher in reading than children whose parents do not read to them (cited in Silvern, 1985). As Parsons (1993) implies, the nature of the child involved in the reading activity should be the main determinant of the length of a reading session. Usually, the younger the child, the shorter the reading session. Children should not become bored with lengthy sessions.

Research has also been conducted on the quality of the practices some parents engage in while reading to their children. It has shown that highly interactive parent-child practices can significantly enhance the value of the process as a promoter of the child's reading abilities. Durkin's

longitudinal study (1966) found that children need to be involved in the story from beginning to end; they need to interact with the reader to extend ideas, to question their own understanding, and to relate their ideas to experience. Similar research (Smith, 1971; Flood, 1977; Teale, 1978) displayed that parents' initiating discussions with children about the books and stories they had read and asking relevant questions were significantly related to reading achievement. It is therefore not enough merely to find out how much a child has been read to and relate this type of experience to literacy development. " We also need to attend carefully to the nature of the activity itself" (Teale, 1984, p. 113).

The effectiveness of such extended interactive practices could be explained by the fact that they encourage active participation by the child in the book-sharing experience. Also, children whose questions are answered may feel more confident in their dealings with print and therefore become more active in their attempts to understand it (Reccord, 1988). Besides, most children love to discuss interesting books with interested parents. Such discussions could therefore motivate children to read more. At the same time they encourage oral language development (Pickering, 1977). Lyons (1972) found that reading to children and giving them opportunities to use language and interact with adults, build

language competence which is so necessary for reading success (cited in Reccord, 1988).

Neuman and Gallagher (1994) offered some very interesting observations on why such extended parent-child interactions around print play an important role in children's literacy development. Their explanation is centred around Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development and his perspective that literacy learning is a social process. Vygotsky claims that children internalize the processes practised while interacting socially with adults, to increase their individual skills and thereby enter the zone of proximal development. These shared thinking processes with adults enable children to function and observe comfortably at slightly challenging levels beyond their own abilities not only during the social transaction but after the interaction terminates. Participation in such social activities using the cognitive and communicative functions of written language therefore draws children to its uses.

Neuman and Gallagher based these claims on the findings of past research. They cited Snow (1983) who showed that "the more children experience adult speech that is contingent upon their own previous utterances, the greater the facilitation of language acquisition" (p. 384). They also used research done by Wells (1979) and Wood et al. (1980) which showed that parents "who respond contingently to their child's utterances

by elaborating, developing, and negotiating about what they mean are more likely to enhance the development of linguistic competence in the child" (p.385).

Inspired by these views and research findings, Neuman and Gallagher did their own study in which they investigated attempts to enhance the uses of labelling, scaffolding dialogue and contingent responsivity to assist literacy interactions between teenage mothers and their children. The results showed that all mothers made greater use of these cues after the treatment was performed. Talking "to" the child gave way to talking responsively "with" the child as parents seemed to build more on children's utterances and connect print to what they already knew. More significantly, "increased responsivity from mothers was associated with increased initiative in literacy and cognitive growth on the part of the children" (p. 398).

These results support those of earlier studies done by Wood and his colleagues (1975, 1976, 1978) and Schachter (1979). In a comprehensive study of maternal speech, Schachter found that the major difference between advantaged and disadvantaged mothers was not the form, dialect, or frequency of the mothers' speech, but rather their ability to respond to their children's communication that appeared to increase the level of cognitive activity. Wood and his fellow educators found that parents who geared their assistance

around the needs of their children were more likely to enhance their children's cognitive abilities than parents who failed to do this (cited in Neuman and Gallagher, 1994).

Ideally, storybook reading therefore should involve, "social interaction between parent and child in which the two participants actively construct meaning based on the text" (Morrow, 1988, p. 91). Parents should provide "scaffolding" to help the child get the intended meaning (Ninio and Bruner, (1978). The child should be active in the processes of asking and being asked questions (Flood, 1977).

It would appear that since it is the child who is attempting to extract meaning from the text, the highest quality or most effective type of parent-child interaction is answering the child's questions and responding to the child's needs on a contingent basis. "By interacting with the child and satisfying his [sic] needs and requirements in relation to written language, one is, essentially, conducting individualized instruction in reading" (Teale, 1978, p. 929). Studies have shown (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976) that a very important service parents provided to early readers was they answered their questions about reading. Neuman and Gallagher (1994) claimed that parents are strategically positioned socially to play a very effective teaching role in this whole process. "Sharing the child's world, the parent can facilitate linking new situations to more familiar ones and draw

connections from the familiar to the novel - tasks viewed as essential for cognitive development" (p.384).

Parents should not give up reading to their children after they enter the primary grades just because children are read to by teachers and have begun to read themselves. Children need this experience well into elementary school. Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) stated, "One of the biggest mistakes made by parents who have read aloud to their children is to put an end to this activity when a child enters middle grades" (p. 344). Children need their ever-expanding curiosity satisfied and that warm "togetherness" relationship (Weiser, 1974). Besides, "at home he [sic] can choose the book, he can stop the reading with a question, he can look at a picture as long as he chooses. He is the focus of attention and each child needs a little of that each day" (p. 229).

Skilful reading to their children is therefore among the gravest and most significant responsibilities that parents have. Holdaway (1987) summed up the general importance of this process to literacy development when he wrote:

Reading to children in as skilled a way as possible should be a dominant feature of the environment in which children learn to read - it should be a fundamental part of any reading programme. This is as true of the later stages of development as of the earlier. To stop reading to children is to deny them one of the most basic and continuing motivations to literacy (p. 17).

Listening to Children Read

"Reading is an activity that involves extracting meaning from print and assimilating that meaning into one's existing store of information" (Athey, 1983, p. 197). Stauffer (1969) said that reading is a thinking process involving an interplay of responses to outer and inner forces which occurs in relation to one's mental context. This is why, he added, that getting answers to one's questions is essential to reading for meaning. Goodman (1986) concluded that in the process of reading, readers sample, predict, test, and confirm as they attempt to derive meaning. As a result they should be encouraged to make guesses and take risks. They self-correct when what they read does not fit into the meanings they are attempting to construct (Clay, 1991).

Because reading is a developmental skill and not an academic subject, it is acquired through the predominance of practice over instruction. Children therefore learn to read by reading. The more they read the better they become at it (Goodman, 1986; McMackin 1993; Rasinski, 1994). There is no point in telling children about reading. They simply need help in getting started, gentle feedback and a kind tolerance of their miscues. "Praise is given for effort. No one sneers at the first fumbling attempts" (Johnson and Louis 1987, p.2).

Both literature and research strongly support parental attempts at guiding and facilitating their children's attempts

at reading. Hewison and Tizard (1980) found that the home factor relating most strongly to reading achievement was whether or not the mother regularly heard the child read. The effect was greater than a range of other variables, including IQ scores, maternal language behaviour and reading to the child. A follow-up study was conducted by Tizard et al. (1982) in which parents in a disadvantaged area were encouraged to hear their children read without given any detailed instruction on how to do it. The result was children's reading skills increased to a greater extent than in cases where extra professional reading tuition was provided.

However, both research and literature support the fact that the quality of the parent-child book interaction is just as important in enhancing children's reading ability in hearing children read as it is in reading to them. Studies done by Hansen (1969) and Teale (1978) showed that parents of children who achieve well in reading guide and instruct their children in the reading process. They assist their children with setting goals, selecting reading materials and activities, researching information, discussing and asking questions on books their children read, the mechanics of reading and homework.

As with other educational efforts, children need to succeed with and feel good about their reading; consequently,

adults should reward them with praise and encouragement (Pickering, 1977). This is especially true during the early stages of reading. Referring to the affective dimension of the home and children's early reading attempts, Greaney (1986) said:

In the final analysis the child's ability to read and his [sic] willingness to read for information and for leisure may depend to a great extent on the degree of success and sheer pleasure experienced in previous encounters with the printed word... It is the task of parents and the school to make encounters with print satisfying and pleasurable (p. 60).

Research also indicates that parents who praise their children for reading well had children with higher reading achievement scores and more positive attitudes toward reading than parents who failed to offer such encouragement. Conversely, parents who exerted excessive pressure for reading achievement and punished children for not reading well had the opposite effect (Silvern, 1985). This supports the premise that "Children must come to see reading as something they do, rather than as a task imposed on them" (Estes and Johnstone, 1977, p.897).

Extended parent-child interactions, including scaffolding and contingent responsivity, also play just as a profound role in children's cognitive and literacy development in listening to children read as they do in reading to children. Pickering (1977) claimed that when hearing children read, parents should

ask factual, evaluative and interpretative questions and invite discussion about what is being read. Interactions such as this, he said, not only cause reading to be enjoyable but extend children's reading through oral language, cause them to think carefully and critically about what they have read and encourage reading comprehension. Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) suggested that instead of just listening to their children read, parents should share their children's reading by asking questions and providing answers about the books and stories they read. These oral responses, they maintained, facilitate clarification of the content of what is being read, setting the stage for additional reading. Athey (1983), said that the quality of parent-child interaction is critical in facilitating children's reading development. Effective parents offer comments and explanations about what is being read, expand conversation, exchange ideas and respond to what their children have to say. Such social interactions enhance children's ability to make inferences or connections about old and new information.

These views have also been confirmed by the findings of research. In reviewing studies of early readers, Teale (1978) reported, "instruction was most successful when it was actually responding to the child's desires and interests" (p.930). Reporting on research conducted by Grant and Brown (1986), Noseworthy (1990) stated that parents of early readers

guided learning, encouraged questioning and provided instruction, at the request of their children.

About twenty years ago a technique known as paired reading originated in England. It involves parent and child reading together for a regular period of time, usually ten to fifteen minutes each day for five days per week (Laite, 1990). Although some provisions are made for discussion of what is read and the child is permitted to read independently, the emphasis is on parent and child listening to each other read simultaneously.

Studies conducted on this technique showed that it is an effective means to develop reading comprehension and reading accuracy in young children (Topping, 1987). Laite (1990) studied the effectiveness paired reading had on reading comprehension, word identification and meaning vocabulary. She found that its impact on reading comprehension and meaning vocabulary was negligible; its impact on word identification, however, was significant. In analyzing the effectiveness of paired reading, Johnston (1989) concluded that it seems to have " a special place in the beginning reading stage, whether at infant school or with older readers who have a long history of failure" (p. 356). Gehman (1994) claimed that this technique is most effective with young readers who have developed sufficient sight vocabulary to handle simple texts

or with older students who need practice in order to read more fluently, efficiently and with more appropriate expression.

Material Availability and Modelling

If reading to children and listening to children read are crucial to literacy development, it obviously follows that availability of appropriate reading materials is also crucial as potential sources for reading. Having someone to ensure such availability and to model the reading process is also imperative, especially for young children.

Albert Einstein once said, "The only rational way of educating is to be an example". Because children are at the height of their imitative powers during the early years of their development, they have strong appetites for learning through example during this time. Because parents are usually their first role models and most "significant others", young children have a strong potential and a natural desire to model after them. If they see the most important people in the world reading and involved with books, experience shows that they very likely will wish to do the same (Trelease, 1985; Smith, 1990). However, it will be hard to convince young children whose parents never read that they should become interested in reading. "A good example is probably the best way to motivate a child to learn to read" (Pickering, 1977, p. 51).

Besides reading themselves, parents should discuss what they read and show by example that reading ignites conversation and interest from others (Pickering, 1977). " By speaking casually about books in general conversation, by his [sic] own reading, and by having books around as part of the environment, the parent can make reading seem attractive and desirable" (Karl, 1971, p. 42). Durkin (1966) and Hansen (1969) showed that when parents themselves read and model the reading process, their children become better readers and develop more positive attitudes toward reading than children whose parents do not read.

Besides providing an effective reading model, parents can stimulate positive attitudes and interests towards reading by ensuring that appealing and suitable reading materials are available to their children (Strong, 1978). Research (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976) has also shown that besides books, early readers were exposed to a variety of "everyday print". Clark found, "This was particularly true for the boys, who showed interest in sign posts, car names, captions on television and names on products at the supermarket" (p. 51). To complement actual reading materials, Durkin found that parents should also ensure that paper and pencil are readily available for the child. She concluded that almost without exception, the beginning of curiosity about written language was an interest in scribbling and drawing.

There is a large body of literature attesting to the fact that reading achievement is highly dependent on the availability, quality and suitability of the literature used in homes. Quoting Gillham (1986), Johnston (1989) stated in reference to reading development, "Worthwhile books are at the heart of the matter" (p. 356). Wigfield and Asher (1984) found that a positive relationship existed between the number of books in the home and children's reading ability (cited in Reccord, 1988). Other studies have shown that children coming from homes where there is a wide range of reading materials - books, magazines, newspapers, comics - have more positive attitudes toward and higher achievement levels in reading than children coming from homes deprived of such materials (Durkin, 1966; Teale, 1978). Doake (1986) claimed that the parents' "responsibility for providing a print oriented environment for their children from as early in their lives as possible is obvious" (p. 86).

To ensure high quality and suitability of reading materials, careful selection of children's literature is essential. The prime purpose of book selection is to provide the right book for the right reader at the right time. This means paying strict attention to the reader's demands, needs and tastes (Strong, 1978). Parents should be careful about doing much book selection for their children. Children need to select many books themselves to ensure that they will learn

how to select appropriate reading materials (Pickering, 1977). The study of young fluent readers by Clark (1976) showed that choice of reading materials belonged to a great extent to the children and was related to their interests at a particular time. Pickering (1977) also claimed that children should not be forced to read every book they select. It should be realized that they too can make mistakes. Estes and Johnstone (1977) said that children should read only what they can and want to read. They should not read books from a sense of duty or command.

When parents do select books for beginning readers, McMackin (1993) emphasized the importance of choosing those that contain repeating sentences, verses or patterns. Repetition provides a "scaffolding" upon which the young child can rely. She also added that young children benefit from books that are predictable and meaningful. Trelease (1985) outlined several guidelines for book selection that could be helpful to parents and teachers of young children. Besides accommodating the child's interests, reading materials should keep pace with the child's growth and maturity. During the first year of a child's life, audio-visual senses are usually developed enough to recognize familiar sights and sounds. Therefore, during the first two or three years, the child should be exposed to books with colourful pictures and exciting sounds that stimulate these senses. Regarding

picture books, he said, " there is no such time as a time to stop picture books" (p. 45). Beautiful and stirring pictures can move older as well as younger children and picture books should be used even with high school students.

As children develop a fascination for a particular subject, books should be collected on it. When children become interested in fairy tales, books with a single tale should be selected first. Up until grade two, children prefer books that are light and easy to hold and are intimidated by heavy books. As children get older, larger books may be used. Chapter books - books that do not have to end reading on one day but can be stretched into other days - should be introduced to children early in their lives, usually at about age four. Once children reach the novel stage, Trelease concluded that parents should preview the book before exposing it to the child to ensure that it is not too sensitive or too complex for the child to handle.

As Trelease suggested, these general guidelines should not be followed rigidly. The reading readiness stage of the child has to be the prime determinant in the book selection process. "Since each child has her [sic] own developmental timetable, we cannot expect all children to arrive at the novel stage at the same time even if they are read to regularly" (p. 48).

Pickering (1977) suggested that it is important for children to have their own collection of books - their own library. They need to be able to look through the books they enjoy as often as they want. Schwartz (1991) claimed, "One of the most wonderful gifts a parent can give a child is a heritage of books carefully selected and lovingly shared" (p. 60). Trelease (1985) suggested that parents should begin a home library immediately after a child is born, preferably in the child's room. He also added, "The sooner children become accustomed to the sight of covers, bindings, and pages of books, the sooner they will begin to develop the concept that books are a part of daily life (p. 76).

Public and school libraries are also excellent sources of book supply for young children. Clarke's study (1976) showed that young fluent readers made extensive use of the local library. Trelease (1985) summed up the value of public libraries to young children and society in general when he said, "Dollar for dollar, the greatest bargain in America today is still the free public library system" (p. 84).

Fiction has predominately been the primary choice of both parents and teachers in reading activities with young children, especially for reading aloud to children. Since the turn of this decade, however, some educators have been arguing that nonfiction should have an equal place with fiction in early literacy development (Doiron, 1994).

The arguments for using fiction in the development of early literacy have been with us for quite some time. Because stories portray the realities of life, they play an important role in understanding the human experience. Through hearing and reading stories, children therefore gain greater insights about the world and about themselves (Smith and Johnson, 1994). Engaging in such meaning-making processes is what educators have come to recognize as the essence of literacy (Doiron, 1994).

Also, fiction has traditionally been associated with reading for enjoyment and learning to read, whereas nonfiction has been associated more with reading for information and reading to learn. This has given narratives the edge over expository texts in early literacy development. Stories have been seen "as having power to motivate and model literacy behaviours which are seen as absolutely essential if we are to develop not only children who can read but children who want to read" (Doiron, 1994 p. 617).

Pappas (1991) seriously challenged the primacy of fiction in literacy development programs and activities. Implying that the goals of reading are for enjoyment and information, she warned that we could create "a barrier to full access to literacy" (p. 461) by placing almost complete emphasis on fiction. Her research showed that a kindergarten child experienced no more difficulty with nonfiction than with

fiction as a means of developing literacy and was equally receptive to both.

Doiron (1994) enumerated several other reasons for securing a greater balance between narrative and expository texts in literacy development and why the trend towards "balancing the books" is growing. He emphasized, "Educators are discovering something that children have known for a long time - reading for information can be fun" (p.618). Children are curious and naturally motivated to learn about the world that surrounds them. Facts, concepts and principles in themselves do not bore them but rather how such information is presented to them or what they are expected to do with it.

Also, the knowledge explosion is putting increasing pressure on "learning how to learn" as a prime educational objective for our youth. Developing children's ability to read for information is increasingly becoming more critical at all educational levels. Besides, teachers and parents are using more historical and scientific fiction with children in reading development activities and an increasing number of teachers, especially primary teachers, are promoting teaching language across the curriculum using themes. This has increased the need for and the emphasis on the use of expository texts in literacy development, including reading aloud to children.

In "balancing the books" between fiction and nonfiction, however, it is important to remember that just as there are poor and high quality fiction texts there are also poor and good quality nonfiction texts. Parents and teachers should refrain from using nonfiction consisting of a series of facts quickly gathered and poorly presented when doing reading activities with their children. Instead, they should select texts that are vividly written, spark children's imagination and develop children's sense of understanding, independent thinking and other characteristics associated with the ability of learning how to learn (Doiron, 1994).

Trelease (1985) summed up the critical importance of book availability to literacy development when he said:

If all sectors of the community work together to bring the excitement of books into our homes early enough and to develop libraries that are truly "delivery rooms for ideas," then we need not fear an electric Pied Piper stealing our children's minds and imaginations (p. 92).

Participation Programs

Although many parents have always helped their children with reading, attention with respect to cultivating this practice and the kind of advice which educators should give to parents did not begin to mount until the 1980's (Topping, 1986). The movement apparently gathered momentum as research increasingly demonstrated the crucial role parents play in the

education of their children in general and in their literacy development in particular and as many educators became convinced that this role can become more effective with greater cooperation and partnership between home and school.

General Needs

Trelease (1985) said, "The most successful and happiest learning experiences are those in which teachers and parents work together" (p.64). Epstein (1986) reported that some educators believe teachers and parents share common goals for children; therefore, it is obvious that they should work together. The urgent need for parent-teacher partnership in literacy development was suggested by Doake (1986) when he said, "we should view learning to read as an outcome of the child's natural learning experience with written language in the home which the school then extends and develops" (p. 2). Pickering (1977) claimed that cooperation between teachers and parents is essential in promoting an ideal environment for children's literacy development. Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) suggested that a necessary first step in helping children achieve reading competence is for teachers to accept and work with parents and share the same goals and aspirations for these children. McDonell (1994) argued, "For a change in literacy to occur, i.e., children becoming lifelong readers, we need to include the efforts of parents and teachers"

(p.19). Referring to the need for a greater partnership between parents and teachers in literacy development, Johnston (1989) concluded that to leave unharnessed this largely untapped resource will require more justification than the mere introduction of parental involvement in our formal education system. "A revolution in literacy could be sparked and fuelled by parents and teachers in determined co-operation" (p. 357).

Specific Needs

Research shows that a correlation exists between socio-economic status and success in reading and formal education. Referring to research conducted by Newson and Newson (1977), Johnston (1989) stated that the child of an unskilled manual worker is four times more likely to be a poor reader at age 7 than the child of a professional. Other studies enumerate several possible reasons for this. Bernstein's studies (1961, 1969) found a significant correlation existed between low socio-economic status of mothers and usage of "restricted" code language (cited in Bruinsna, 1978). Teale (1986) and Morrow (1988) in their studies of low-income families found that in most cases there were few or no children's books in low SES homes and parents seldom read to children. Using research done by Ninio (1980), Teale (1984) reported that when low SES mothers read to their children, they used less

productive vocabulary and questioning than did high SES mothers. Other studies of low-income families (Stack 1974; Whiting and Whiting, 1975; Goldenberg, 1987; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990) suggested that, "parents with limited needs for literacy in their workplace and social settings may not nurture or encourage early literacy behaviours displayed by their children" (cited in Neuman and Gallagher, 1994, p. 384).

All these theories and research findings support the fact that within situations involving poverty and difficult living circumstances, the potential for serious intergenerational illiteracy patterns developing looms large. They also support the view of Wells (1986) who claimed that social and educational inequality is passed on from one generation to the next through the emphasis given to literacy development in the day-to-day activities of families. In order to break the cycle, the need for parent-teacher co-operation is most acute in these situations.

On the other side of the coin, there are the parents who promote intergenerational literacy by exposing their children to rich language experiences, books and reading at an early age (Jongsma, 1990). A study by Weinberger et al. (1986) found that without training, some parents, especially those who are committed to helping their children with reading, follow similar strategies as do teachers. The differences were that parents were more likely to react to error and showed less

concern for children's understanding than do teachers. Hence, they were a little more critical, were less likely to provide a good reading model and placed greater emphasis on phonic analysis. However, these differences were no more extreme than differences found in strategies used by different teachers. In such cases the need for parents and teachers to work together should obviously not be as pressing and would seem to require just refining certain practices.

Research has also been done on why certain parents provide activities, materials and types of interactions that facilitate literacy development and others do not provide such an environment. Quoting research from the Plowden Report (1967) and the Newsons' Survey (1977) in England, Johnston (1989) claimed that "the idea of working class families being apathetic towards the education of their children was largely unsubstantiated" (p. 352). The survey suggested that although the participation may differ in quantity and quality, just as many working class parents as middle class parents were prepared to assist their children with reading. Johnston further pointed out that according to a study done by Mortimore and Blackstone (1982), the problem with working class parents is not a lack of interest in their children's education but rather a problem of a lack of self-confidence and knowledge about what to do.

Research done by Lareau (1987, 1989) and Bourdieu (1977), reported similar results (cited in Lancy and Nattiv, 1992, p. 211). Lareau found that working class parents differed widely from upper-middle class parents in terms of perceived responsibility and competence for assisting with their children's education both in and out of school. Bourdieu found that middle class parents know more about strategies to help their children with emergent literacy than do working class parents.

In their study involving teenage mothers in their children's literacy development, Neuman and Gallagher (1994) found that these mothers' prior lack of involvement in literacy-related activities with their children did not appear to come from a lack of caring or "low status" but rather from a lack of knowing that certain activities and behaviours in the home are conducive to literacy learning and cognitive growth. They claimed, "What these women needed was education. Once engaged, mothers and children together were able to create a zone of proximal development, resulting in dramatic gains in children's active participation and intellectual development" (p. 399). As Johnston (1989) concluded with respect to reading and social class, "The differing results in reading attainment may, then, be due to some parents lacking knowledge about how to go about it rather than lacking sufficient interest" (p. 353).

Ignorance in how to proceed in helping children with literacy development is apparently not restricted to low socio-economic classes of parents. It would seem to be greater among lower SES parents; however, it is apparently a general phenomenon. In his review of research on parent involvement in reading, Silvern (1985) reported that many parents are ignorant of the specific benefits reading to their children have for their children's reading development, how long they should read to their children and types of practices to adopt in making this experience most effective. Epstein (1986) in her study of parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement found that most parents reported that they could help more if teachers showed them how. Rasinski (1994) said, "Parents want to help their children become successful readers, but often they don't know how to help. The result has been the marketing success of reading programs of dubious value advertised over radio and television" (p. 31).

Freshour (1972) claimed that because most parents want to help their children with reading but do not know how, they may do more harm than good unless some guidance is offered. Schwartz (1991) claimed that parents generally want and need to know how best to facilitate their children's reading development; however, what they hear and read or recall from their own school days is usually out of date and often

inappropriate. As a result, they often resort to using flash cards, workbooks and a skill-drill approach to literacy which can easily lead to a negative attitude towards reading. Topping (1985) expressed a similar view when he said that many parents when hearing their children read, "pounce on error words and use phonic-analysis and synthesis correction procedures which are at best time-consuming and at worst catastrophic, producing despair in the child and tension in the relationship" (p. 23).

The changing of reading programs so often tends to aggravate such problems and confusion (Bialostok, 1992). Johnston (1989) suggested that parents should be given clear guidelines to ensure that the literacy activities they engage in with their children are compatible with the model of reading adopted by the school. "If there are differences between the teacher's and the parent's model of reading, then difficulties might arise and the child might become confused" (p. 354).

Trelease (1985) implied that some parents become so obsessed with teaching their children to read that they push rather than feed their children's minds. They fail to see the negative consequences of such action. Because success begets success and failure breeds failure, "One of the worst things a parent can do is to push or pressure his [*sic*] child" (Freshour, 1972, p. 515). Again, as Topping (1985) said,

"For many parents, anxiety about their children's progress is accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, frustration and tension. They don't know how to help, and these emotions often spill out into family conflict during abortive home "tutoring" sessions" (p. 26). Holdaway (1987) warned about the drastic consequences of such parental actions. Nothing in the reading environment, he claimed, should cause children to hate or fear books. "It would be better to avoid teaching reading than to teach it aversively. The personal harm done to individual children, and the social harm done to the community by teaching children to hate literacy is truly awesome" (p. 20).

Durkin's study (1966) of early readers found that some children can be taught to read before they come to school provided they have someone willing and able to teach them. This implies the need for training for parents who lack the ability. Generally, the need for such training is apparently great; however, it would seem to vary in degree and nature from situation to situation.

Structure

Most educators agree that parent-teacher partnership programs are necessary to assist parents with their children's reading development. Many also appear to have expressed

similar views on the nature and form these programs should take.

Brzeinski and Driscoll (1971) found that parents can help prepare their children for reading; however, "Significant accomplishment ... depends primarily upon practising the specified activities with the child" (p. 65). Pickering (1977) said that such programs should give parents a basic understanding of the reading process and help them define their role in their children's literacy development. Emery (1975) claimed that parents do not need a course in reading instruction. Assisting parents develop a basic orientation to the task and a "conscious but un-pressured plan" (p. 93) might be all that is necessary. This would include an understanding of the type of climate they should create for their children and the need for certain activities to be implemented. Silvern (1985) argued that the positive aspects of parent education programs warrant a large-scale implementation of well-planned activities. Reporting on research done on the effects of parental involvement programs, Topping (1986) stated, "There is evidence that where schools apply themselves methodically to developing parental involvement programs, good results are possible even in disadvantaged areas (p. 36). Jongsma, (1990) expressed the need for two basic types of programs - informational and assistance.

Neuman and Gallagher (1994) implied that the degree and length of assistance given to parents vary with the need. In some cases, just fine-tuning parental assistance may be all that is necessary. An example of fine-tuning would be helping parents become more skilful in using contingent responsivity in reading activities with their children. In hardship conditions like extreme poverty, poor health and situations involving most teenage mothers, however, parents may need regular, ongoing assistance.

Topping (1985) offered some practical suggestions for teachers to follow when setting up partnerships with parents in reading development. From the beginning, teachers should acknowledge that parents are the major influence. They should be listened to and not just talked at. They should be permitted to modify procedures to make the techniques really theirs and to suit their particular situation. Guidelines about techniques should be straightforward, sensible and such that parents can easily internalize. "As with any other learner, parents need early success, small steps in difficulty, and care to avoid over-burdening with information" (p 27).

Rasinski (1994) outlined several principles for effective parent involvement in reading. These include: ensuring involvement is systematic and consistent; including appropriate reading materials; using time efficiently and

including activities that are easy to learn and implement, informal, enjoyable and interactive. Neuman and Gallagher (1994) emphasized the importance of home visits and contacts to complement materials and physical environmental changes and ensure program effectiveness. Such contacts, they said, are "critical for sharing information and for establishing rapport, trust, and ongoing dialogue with mothers as they venture into new ways of engaging with their children" (p. 399).

Becher (1982) in her review of research on parent education programs reported that the most effective programs were characterized by home visits by teachers; one-to-one parent-teacher relationships; attempts to ensure quality control through clearly specified objectives, activities and monitoring procedures; highly structured, concrete tasks for parents; long-term exposure (18 to 24 months) and provision for modification to allow proper fit for each parent-child situation.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990) concluded that the distinguishing factor that appears over and over in successful parent involvement programs is, "every attempt is made to solicit and enjoin all parents in promoting the goals and objectives of successful reading development. This means a concerted effort on the part of educators - one that

constantly seeks to make every family a reading family" (p. 425).

Content

Both literature and research offer some clear guidelines on what to include in programs aimed at assisting parents with their children's literacy development. According to Silvern (1985), the clearest implication is teachers need to encourage parents to read to their children and inform parents on the significant benefits that can be derived from this activity. As Jongsma (1990) suggested:

If, as numerous studies show, success in learning to read is related to listening to stories in the pre-school years, then we should be able to promote literacy substantially if we can find ways to assure that all children have this valuable experience before they arrive at school (p. 522).

According to Schwartz (1991), "A hundred years ago, reading aloud was a fairly common tradition that all members of the family enjoyed. Today, this tradition has been practically wiped out by the competition of television, movies and the other media" (p. 59). Because of this apparent void and the tremendous significance this activity has for literacy development, a very significant potential would seem to exist here for helping to resolve our serious illiteracy problem. This would appear to be especially true if parents were trained to better perform this task.

To increase the effectiveness of their reading aloud to their children, teachers need to train parents in the "do's" and "don'ts" of this activity (Trelease, 1985). How parents read or listen to their children may be critical. Drawing on Gordon (1976), Lancy and Nattiv (1992) stated, "One can read to children in a way that would make them never want to read again, or ... that could make them climb back into one's lap and ask for more" (p. 209).

Parents who are not fluent readers need assistance in "developing the skill and, equally important, the confidence to read to their children" (Jongsma, 1990 p. 522). Teachers need also to discuss with parents the amount of and best time to read (Silvern, 1985). Particular care should be given to training parents to make this a "cognitive" rather than a "listening" activity. This would include training in responding to the questions and dialogue posed by the child and asking questions and initiating discussion on what is being read in an attempt to help the child extract meaning from the story (Silvern, 1985; Neuman and Gallagher, 1994).

Like any skill, reading is learned best when it is practised a lot (Rasinski, 1994). Once children acquire the skill to begin reading, parents should be encouraged to ensure that these children get sufficient practice. However, it is important that this practice be positive (Topping, 1985). Toward this end, teachers need "to remind parents about the

difference between pressure and expectation and then to assist them in setting realistic short-term and long-term objectives for their children" (Silvern, 1985). Parents who shout, pounce on errors and emphasize phonic analysis and synthesis corrections should be encouraged to use praise for effort and be trained to help their children make greater use of context clues to develop self-correction strategies (Topping, 1985).

Encouraging children to use prediction and risk-taking when reading should be a part of the same training program (Buchanan, 1986). Skill in using extended parent-child interactions around the book or story being read should also be emphasized (Pickering, 1977). To ensure reading success, teachers need to assist parents in selecting worthwhile reading material which meets their children's interest and reading levels (Trelease, 1985).

Rasinski (1994) claimed that, "children spend an incredibly small amount of time reading outside of school" (p.31). In one study, he added, fifth-grade students reported that they read less than 20 minutes per day; however, they watch television two hours daily. Because, as research confirms, we learn to read by reading and a large void exists in children's out-of-school reading experience, Rasinski concluded that "A tremendous opportunity exists here for increasing reading and improving reading performance" (p. 31).

Referring to research done on parental involvement in

literacy development, Silvern (1985) stated, "an important implication of this research for teachers is that they should actively encourage and assist parents in making greater use of libraries and their resources" (p. 48). Toward this end, he recommended that informational and assistant programs involve both parents and their children and be undertaken at the library rather than at some indirect facility source. A second implication of this research, he said, is for teachers to remind parents of the critical need for children to see parents and other family members reading.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) offered the best and the second best reading advice teachers can give to parents. The best was the simple act of reading aloud to their children. The second best was to create a home environment that promotes literacy growth. This included advice on finding the best time and place for all family members to read, providing home libraries containing reading materials for all family members, the need for children to see their parents read, the need for all family members to talk about and share what is being read, the need to connect reading with everyday experiences and the need to encourage writing.

Conclusion

After reviewing research on parent-teacher programs in reading, Silvern (1985) concluded, "it is encouraging to note

that informational and training programs designed to instruct parents about the teaching of reading and to encourage their active participation have resulted in significant increases in the reading attitudes and achievement of their children (p. 49). Webb et al. (1985) found that a most significant result of parental participation in the teaching of reading was the change in parental attitudes. For many, the barrier of "not wanting to interfere" and "leaving it to the school" was broken down as well as the reluctance to discuss the wider problems they encounter with their children.

Within the past ten years, an increasing number of parents have wanted to become closely involved in the education of their children. In many countries this desire has been increasingly supported by legislation giving parents the right to be involved. More school teachers and administrators are also seeing the critical importance of parental involvement in literacy development (Topping, 1987). As a result, "Gone are the days when learning to read was an activity firmly based in schools and controlled by teachers. Recently, there have been many successful attempts to involve parents in helping their children to read" (Loveday and Simmons, 1988, p. 84).

Drawing on research done in the U.K., Johnston (1989) stated the following conclusions: over 80% of all parents were willing to participate in teaching reading to their children

(Newson and Newson, 1977); parents, even in disadvantaged homes, who received specific instructions from teachers, were more effective in teaching reading to their children than were remedial teachers or parents who did not receive such instructions (Haringey Project, 1970's); parents who received specific guidance from teachers were successful in enhancing reading skills for several children already identified as reading failures (South Oxford Project, 1984).

Rasinski (1994) convincingly stated that if he had to choose an aspect of reading education that holds the greatest promise for improving children's reading, he would choose getting parents involved in their children's literacy development. Parental involvement does work, he adds. It results in, "children reading more, which, in turn, means improved reading performance and attitudes. And parents will get involved if we provide them with training, support, and encouragement. When we do this, this great potential for reading may finally be realized (p. 31).

Such convincing discoveries would appear to have very powerful implications for facilitating the resolution of our serious illiteracy problem. As Tizard et al. (1982) suggested with reference to such research findings, "staffing resources at present allocated ... for remedial work in primary schools might better be employed in organising contact and collaboration between class teachers and parents ... on

specific, practical teaching matters" (p. 14). This, they imply, would place the emphasis on the prevention rather than the cure of reading problems. As Weiser (1974) suggested, "the key to improved reading skills may not be in the classroom - it may be in the home" (p. 227).

CHAPTER III

SOURCES OF DATA, METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to involve parents in a program of highly interactive reading practices that would inform and train them in how to participate effectively in parent-child book reading and to provide support for their attempts. If, as hypothesized, students of parents exposed to the program made greater gains in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary development than children of parents who were not exposed, the program will be judged to be effective and the findings will have significant pedagogical and policy implications for primary grade students and their parents and teachers. This chapter states the hypotheses of the study and describes how students were selected, the procedures followed in the experiment and the instruments used to collect data.

Hypotheses

The experimental design was set up to test the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an

experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in reading comprehension than a control group.

Hypotheses 2: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in receptive vocabulary than a control group.

Hypotheses 3: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in sight vocabulary than a control group.

Sample

This study was conducted in a primary school in the Conception Bay North area of Newfoundland during the 1993-94 school year. The school has four streams of students from kindergarten to grade three. Students are bussed from approximately a 20 kilometre radius from several rural communities.

Students participating in this study were selected from a population of approximately 80 students within the grade one level in June, 1993. The sample (n=14) consisted of 3 matched pairs of girls and 4 matched pairs of boys. One student from

each pair was randomly placed in the experimental group ($n=7$), the other was placed in the control group ($n=7$).

Procedures

In June of 1993, permission to conduct the study during the 1993-94 school year was obtained from the School Board District Superintendent and the School Principal (Appendices A and B). Permission to do the study also was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of Memorial University.

A letter explaining the need for testing and requesting permission to do the study was sent to parents of all 14 students immediately following the opening of school in September 1993 (Appendix C). All 14 parents signed and returned the letter thus signifying their consent.

Design

A pretest-midtest-posttest-follow-up test control group design with matching pairs was used for the study. In June of 1993, teachers of 80 grade one students matched seven pairs of students on the basis of ability in reading, socioeconomic status, gender and age. Ability was determined by teacher observations of a student's overall performance in reading throughout the grade one school year. Research shows a significant correlation (at the .01 level) between teacher ratings through observations and scores on standardized tests

(Borg and Gall, 1989; Sharpley and Edgar, 1986). Socio - economic status was determined by grade one teachers on the basis of parental occupation and income. All students came from working class homes with low income levels. Because these teachers had worked with these children and their parents for at least one school year, they were in an excellent position to match students on these characteristics. This matching process produced three pairs of girls and four pairs of boys.

In September, 1993, following the initial testing, one member of each pair of students was randomly assigned to the experimental group ($n=7$) and the other to the control group ($n=7$). A letter was sent to parents of the experimental group requesting permission for their children to be involved in the interactive reading program and for their cooperation during the 14 week project (Appendix D). All seven parents signed and returned this letter giving consent to be involved.

As a result of prior matching, each student in each matched pair should have been closely comparable with respect to the control variables; therefore, initial differences between the experimental and control group on the dependent variables should have been reduced. Under these conditions, the small sample should yield the information sought more efficiently than a larger sample. This should make the study more qualitative and analytical, and allow the researcher to

make more accurate conclusions. A statistical analysis was also done on the confounding variables of group and gender using pretest scores to confirm if matching significantly equated the groups on the matching variables at the outset of the study.

Testing and Evaluation

Pretests were administered to both experimental and control groups in September, 1993, to establish initial reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary levels. Shortly after, the program began for the experimental group.

All 14 students were given a midtest on the dependent variables during the seventh to eighth week interval of the program and posttest at the end of the program. About three months after the program for the experimental group had ended, all 14 students were given a follow-up test to determine any enduring effects of the program. These repeated test measures were carried out to enable the researcher to monitor changes as they occurred.

Pretest, midtest and posttests scores for each pair of students were then compared and analyzed to determine if the experimental group made any gains over the control group in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary during each of these time intervals. Follow-up

test scores were also analyzed to determine any enduring effects the program had on the experimental group. Before making conclusions, implications and recommendations, all scores, from pretest through to follow-up test, were further analyzed to confirm whether any gains made by the experimental group were statistically significant on each of the dependent variables.

The student with the lowest reading ability at pretest time was also selected from the experimental group as well as the one with the highest ability. Comparisons of raw score gains from pretest to follow-up test were then made for each student on each of the dependent variables to determine possible effects the program could have had on students of differing ability. Similarly, to discover possible effects the program had on boys as compared to girls, the mean gains made by the boys in the experimental group between pretest and follow-up test time on each dependent variable were compared to the mean gains made by the girls in the experimental group.

At the beginning and end of the study an assessment was also conducted on students in both experimental and control groups to determine if this highly interactive reading program had any positive effects on the reading attitudes and habits of the students. At the end of the study, parents' reported perceptions of the effects of the program on their children's

reading behaviour and their general reactions to the program were analyzed.

Treatment

Both large group meetings with parents and small group meetings with individual parents and their children were intentionally scheduled to take place in the school's resource center where participants were surrounded with children's literature. This center has a collection of at least 10,000 children's books. For the purpose of this study, the researcher provided also approximately 500 personal copies of children's books and many other books were selected from reading resource classrooms. This provided an extensive variety of children's literature to meet the needs and interests of each child.

The initial meeting with parents in the experimental group was held during the third week in September, 1993. From the outset, deliberate attempts were made to establish parental identification with the program. They were told that the program would be a cooperative one based on the collaborations of all participants. Toward this end, their comments, concerns and advice were sought throughout. Also, attempts were always made through questioning to "draw" information from them before summarizing on the flip chart.

The informal style of the meetings was also aimed at encouraging parental relaxation and input.

The first part of the meeting was taken up discussing the crucial role parents play in the education of their children, especially in literacy development, the advantages parents have over regular teachers in the process, and the pressing need for greater parent-teacher partnerships in attempting to enhance children's reading abilities. This was followed by an overview of the 14 week program.

The specific objectives of the program were discussed. Parents were informed that as a result of participating in this program, they should become more knowledgeable of or more skilled in :

- (1) the benefits of spending quality time in reading to their children and listening to and guiding their children's reading
- (2) the processes of reading to their children and listening to their children's reading
- (3) selecting the appropriate reading materials for their children.

The selection of students and the purpose for testing were also explained. An outline of each test was presented and the approximate time intervals they would be administered were discussed.

About mid-way through the meeting, parents agreed on exactly what was expected for the 14 week duration of the

program. This included parent-child book reading for at least 15 minutes five nights per week. Children were required to read five books per week under the direction of their parents. In addition, parents were requested to read three books per week to their children. A weekly home reading log was provided for parents to record each reading session (Appendix E). For the 14 week duration, parents also agreed to tape record one reading session per week. These tapes were returned to the researcher and examined on a weekly basis to ensure the reading sessions were carried out as demonstrated and the literature used was appropriate to the child's reading level. Feedback and support of the taped readings were given to parents by the researcher on a weekly basis. At the end of this initial meeting all parents appeared to be very positive toward and committed to the program. It was decided to hold the next meeting early in the following week.

The second meeting focused primarily on the "hows" of effective parent-child book reading. At the beginning, however, the benefits of reading to children and listening to and guiding their reading were discussed. Collaboration also took place on the critical importance of having appropriate children's literature to facilitate these processes, and the principles of effective book selection. This led to a discussion of the significant effects the quality of parent-

child interactions can have on increasing the benefits of reading to and hearing children read.

At this point, emphasis was placed on getting parents to understand that the better they respond to what their children are trying to do when reading or listening to stories being read, the more effective their assistance will be. It was explained that what children do in these processes is simply try to get meaning from written language. Asking questions and initiating discussions before, during and after reading is a type of scaffolding that helps children integrate familiar background knowledge with new knowledge found in print and thereby derive meaning. Interactions requiring children to predict and confirm what happens in a story or book and self-correct when necessary appear to be most effective in facilitating the child's drawing connections from the known to the unknown.

It was also emphasized that parents should be most effective in facilitating their children's literacy development if there are willing to help when it is needed in the way it is needed. The child should obviously determine the type and amount of help needed as well as when it is needed. As a result, responding contingently to children's questions would appear to be the most effective interactions parents could utilize in helping children with reading. It is truly individualizing instruction in reading.

Following this discussion, the researcher read an unfamiliar children's book to parents to demonstrate procedures to use for parent-child book reading. Before beginning, the need to have a quiet, relaxing time and place for reading was emphasized. In the book reading process, parents agreed to pretend they were grade two students when reading was in progress. They were encouraged to ask questions typical of grade two students. On times, the researcher would stop reading and ask why certain interactions took place. During these times, parents discarded their imaginary roles and participated in discussion.

From the outset, the researcher asked parents to predict what the book might be about by viewing the cover and reading the title. The first page was viewed and a discussion was centred around what they thought might happen in the story. It was concluded that these interactions would encourage children to use their background knowledge to make predictions. The researcher continued by asking questions such as "Why do you think this will happen? Who do you think will be in the story? Where do you think the story takes place?" By discussing a book informally before reading it, or hearing it read, it was concluded that students would become more interested in the story and would want to read it or hear it read to find if their predictions and expectations actually take place. Talking this way before books are read

also informally helps children to build an awareness of the way stories are constructed.

After the first few pages were read, parents were encouraged to discuss the events and ideas presented so far in the story to determine if their predictions were confirmed or rejected. In this sense prediction was considered as asking questions and comprehension as receiving answers. If predictions were found to be incorrect, praise was given for effort. Parents were then asked to predict and/or infer what they think will happen next. They were asked why they were thinking this way as they discussed expectations about the upcoming events of the story. Discussion concluded that if students have followed and talked about the ideas, characters and events of the story every few pages during parent-child reading, they should be able to logically predict what will happen. As they read or hear, they predict and confirm, learn new information and become meaningfully involved with the content. This process was considered a very significant part of learning to read.

Following the reading of the book, the process of asking inferential, interpretative, evaluative and appreciative types of questions continued. These questions included: "What part of the story did you like best? What do you think will happen to the main character? Do you think it was right for her friends to visit her at night?" Following the discussion of

these questions, parents were asked to think of and to discuss other possible questions of this nature which would enhance comprehension. A list of possible questions parents could ask to facilitate reading to and with children was then given to each parent (Appendix F).

During the latter part of this meeting, the researcher led discussion on and demonstrated specific interactive techniques parents were recommended to use when helping their children identify unknown words using children's literature. The researcher found that parents needed much guidance and instruction in this area. As a result, a hand-out containing these strategies was given to parents (Appendix G). From the beginning, it was concluded that if a child is having difficulty reading many words on a page, this particular book is too difficult. It is very important that books children read are at both their interest and reading levels.

The consensus was that traditionally when a child came to a difficult word during parent-child reading, the child was asked to "sound it out". The researcher pointed out that while phonics is an important part of reading, it tends to detract from the child's deriving meaning from the story or book, the primary goal of reading. Attempts should be made not to allow miscues to interrupt the child's meaning and cause the child to lose the thread of it. To produce independent readers who monitor and self-correct as they read,

a series of strategies were recommended to be tried before asking the child to "sound it out".

(1) Silence

Deliberate silence for five to ten seconds is an effective one-to-one instructional technique. It provides time for the child to question and think and a chance to self-correct and develop greater independence and self-confidence.

(2) Substituting

Advise the child to put in a word that would make sense and then read ahead to see if it does. Sometimes, children make substitutions without realizing it. It is important to help them realize that it is not necessary to come to a standstill over unfamiliar words. Substituting other words that make sense is acceptable in order to continue the flow of reading. Asking children to use words they think would make sense in the sentence also prompts them to really think about the meaning of what they have read. If they can offer words that make sense, it shows they have been thinking about the story as they read and have a good understanding of what it is about.

(3) Rerunning

Request the child to go back to the beginning of the sentence, or paragraph, and try it again. The child should be encouraged to rerun when position in reading is lost, unknown words are encountered or confusion in meaning occurs.

(4) Blanking

This is simply reading ahead. When the child encounters an unknown word encourage the child to say "blank," read on, and then go back to try possibilities that might fit.

(5) Recalling

Use comments like, "You had trouble with that word a few minutes ago or yesterday. Can you remember?"

(6) Picture clues

Encourage the child to use pictures in books to help figure out what the word could be.

Parents were reminded also to be positive toward their children's reading, to give praise and encouragement for risk taking, making predictions, self-correcting, and discussing ideas, characters and events of the story. When children experience difficulty and try to work out the trouble spots, they were advised also to focus on what their children are doing well or attempting to do, remain loving and supportive and not to get frustrated or become critical. Comments such as the following were suggested:

(1) "Good for you. I like the way you tried to work that out."

(2). "That was a good try. Yes, that word would make sense there."

(3) "I like the way you looked at the picture to help yourself."

(4) "I like the way you went back to the beginning of the sentence and tried it again. That's what good readers do."

(5) "You are becoming a good reader. I'm proud of you."

During the next meetings, the researcher met weekly with each parent and child separately on an appointment basis. At the beginning of each meeting, children were given time to select the weekly quota of books they wished their parents to read to them and others which they wanted to read to their parents. This gave the researcher an opportunity to review with each individual parent the key points involved in the program and respond to any questions, problems or concerns any parent might have had. Toward the end of each meeting, the parent and the researcher scrutinized the books the child had selected and assisted the child with further selection where necessary. Weekly meetings of this nature continued for the duration of the study.

As the program progressed, the researcher also used these meetings to give individual feedback to the taped reading sessions, discuss problems and successes experienced and give parents praise for efforts made. In addition to weekly appointments, parents were encouraged to contact the researcher at home if any questions arose. Support and encouragement were therefore provided throughout the duration of the program as needed. This ongoing support and communication with parents played an important role in

obtaining cooperation and consistent participation throughout the study.

Students in both the experimental and control groups received regular classroom reading instruction throughout the project. It was assumed that parents provided the homework assistance as usual. Parents of the control group were not aware their children were involved in a study. No information was provided to them other than what was contained in the initial letter to parents requesting permission to do the necessary testing (Appendix C). Teachers were aware of a reading project carried out by the researcher, but were not given any details. They were instructed to direct any inquiries to the researcher.

Testing and Evaluation Instruments

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test

Reading comprehension was measured using the reading comprehension component of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GM) (2nd Canadian Edition, 1992). Canadian norms were developed for this edition in 1990-91. This test was group administered using level B, forms 3 & 4. Form 3 was used for pretesting and midtesting; form 4 was used for the posttest and follow-up test. Each form of the test consists of 46 passages accompanied by three pictures.

Students are required to read each passage and choose the picture which illustrates this passage or answers a question about it. The first are simple sentences which gradually increase to longer more difficult passages. Students begin at item one and continue through the test at their own speed for 35 minutes. To calculate the raw score, correct responses are totalled. Tables are provided in the test manual to convert the raw scores to T-scores, percentile ranks, grade equivalents, stanines, and extended scales scores. For the purpose of this study, only the raw scores were used.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Revised Edition (PPVT) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) was used to measure oral language receptive vocabulary. This test was standardized using a sample of children and youth, and a selected sample of adults in the United States. It can be used for subjects whose ages range from 2 1/2 years to 40 years of age. Recommended starting points correspond with age and are coded to the left of the items on the individual test record sheet. This individually administered picture test contains two parallel forms, L and M. Form L was used for pretesting and midtesting; form M was used for posttesting and follow-up testing. Both forms contain 175 test items which range in order of increasing difficulty. Students are shown plates

containing four different pictures and are required to select the picture which best illustrates the meaning of a word spoken by the examiner. Because of this response method, it is not necessary that students be able to read.

To calculate a raw score, a basal and a ceiling must be established. To arrive at a basal, the examiner begins at the recommended starting point for the age of each child and continues until the first error is made. If eight or more consecutive correct responses are made, a basal has been established. If, however, the starting point is too high and a basal is not reached, testing continues backwards until the eight consecutive correct responses are made. Testing then continues forward until the child makes six errors in eight consecutive responses to arrive at a ceiling. The last item becomes the ceiling item.

To compute a student's raw score, all errors between the ceiling item and the highest basal are subtracted from the ceiling item. All items below the highest basal are counted as correct. Tables are provided in the manual which convert raw scores to standard score equivalents, percentile ranks, stanines and age equivalents. For the purpose of this study, raw scores were used.

Slosson Oral Reading Test

The Slosson Oral Reading Test(S) (1963) was administered to measure each student's level of sight vocabulary. A reliability coefficient of .99 shows that this test can be used at frequent intervals. This test consists of 10 graded lists of 20 isolated words, ranging from List P (Primer level) to high school. List P is recommended for the first few months of grade one, and list 1 for the remainder of grade one. Lists 2 to 8 correspond to each grade level; however, list 9 is recommended for high school.

Each of these lists was enlarged and placed on bristol board and presented to each student, one at a time. Children began at a list where it was expected they could pronounce all 20 words correctly. If this list were too difficult, or even if the child missed one word, the researcher went back until a list was reached where all 20 words were pronounced correctly. After the starting list was determined, the test continued into more advanced lists until the stopping list was reached where a child was unable to pronounce all 20 words. Five seconds were given to pronounce each word; each mispronounced or omitted word was counted as an error.

A child's raw score was computed by adding the total number of words pronounced correctly in all lists. Also, words below the beginning list were automatically given credit and added to this total. Half of this raw score determined a

child's reading level. For easy reference a conversion table was provided which changes the raw score to a reading level or grade equivalent score. For example, a raw score of 42 indicates a reading level of 2.1 or the first month of grade two. Again, for the purpose of this study, only the raw scores were used.

Inventory of Reading Attitude

To determine the effects of the program on children's attitudes and interests towards reading, an adaptation of the Inventory of Reading Attitude developed by Vogt et al. (cited in Howes, 1963) was administered to each student in control and experimental groups at the beginning of the study and three months following the end of the program (Appendix H). A "yes" response on this Inventory reflected a positive attitude towards reading, a "no" response reflected a negative attitude.

Parents' Questionnaire

All seven parents of the experimental group filled out a brief questionnaire at the end of the program signifying their perceptions of the effects of the program on their children's reading behaviours and their general reaction to the program (Appendix I). This questionnaire was developed specifically for this purpose by the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

This chapter has four main purposes. First, the findings of the statistical analysis of the data collected for the study will be presented and interpreted. Second, the results will be discussed in terms of the hypotheses of the study and related research findings. Third, the effects of the program on students of differing abilities and gender and on students' attitudes towards reading will be presented. Finally, the reactions of parents involved in the program will be analyzed.

The statistical analysis of collected data will be conducted primarily to fulfill two purposes. First, it will be used to investigate the validity of the design model used in the study. Second, it will serve as a basis to determine whether any or all of the three hypotheses will be accepted or rejected.

Because the researcher was unable to randomly select students into each of the control and experimental groups at the outset of the study, it was impossible to completely control for the effects of potential confounding variables. Control was therefore established by using a matching procedure on the basis of age, gender, socio-economic status and ability. Although matching reduces initial differences

between the experimental and control groups on the dependent variables, it rarely completely eliminates them (Borg and Gall, 1989). As a result, the investigator had to determine whether the relationships between the group and gender variables on the one hand, and the pretest scores on reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary on the other, were not significant or effectively zero.

In analyzing the data and interpreting the findings towards the proposed ends, several statistical procedures were used. Descriptive statistics were obtained for the three dependent variables, reading comprehension (GM), receptive vocabulary (PPVT) and sight vocabulary (S). Six one-way ANOVAS were conducted, three by gender and three by group, on pretest scores for each dependent variable (GM1, PPVT1 and S1) to confirm the validity of the design of the study. Three sets of ANOVAS were completed to estimate the effects of group membership, control and experimental, on each of the three dependent variables at midtest, posttest and follow-up test intervals (GM2, GM3, GM4; PPVT2, PPVT3, PPVT4; S2, S3, S4). To further support the results of these ANOVAS, a correlation analysis was conducted in which each variable in the data set (Group, Gender, GM1, GM2, GM3, GM4, PPVT1, PPVT2, PPVT3, PPVT4, S1, S2, S3, S4) was correlated with every other variable.

At the conclusion of the statistical analysis, the results of the Inventory of Reading Attitude were analyzed to see what effects the program had on children's desire to read. Finally, the results of the questionnaire completed by parents were examined to ascertain parents' perceptions of the program, including their perceived effects on children's reading behaviours.

Descriptive Statistics

Group and Gender

There is virtually no difference between the mean for boys (12.250) and the mean for girls (12.667) on the Gates MacGinitie Reading pretest (GM1) (Table 1). Very little difference also exists between the means for gender on the Slosson Oral Reading pretest (S1). Similarly, only small differences exist between the means for control and experimental groups on the same two pretests (GM1 and S1) (Table 2). It therefore seems that at the outset of this experiment, both gender and group membership were not discriminatory factors as far as reading comprehension and sight vocabulary were concerned.

The means for the control group (82.286) and the experimental group (85.714) also exhibit only a slight difference for the Peabody Picture Vocabulary pretest (PPVT1)

(Table 2). The means on this same test for boys (79.750) and girls (89.667), however, display a difference of about 10 points (Table 1). It therefore seems that control and experimental groups were significantly equated on receptive vocabulary at the beginning of the study; however, boys and girls were significantly different on this variable.

Table 1
Pretest Scores by Gender

Variable	Boys(n=8)		Girls(n=6)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
GM1	12.250	6.798	12.667	5.007
PPVT1	79.750	9.603	89.667	5.538
S1	27.625	17.004	32.667	27.493

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test; PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; S = Slosson Oral Reading Test; suffix 1 = pretest.

Table 2
Pretest Scores by Group

Variable	<u>Control (n=7)</u>		<u>Experimental (n=7)</u>	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
GM1	12.143	5.210	12.714	6.897
PPVT1	82.286	9.861	85.714	9.232
S1	27.429	15.598	32.143	26.935

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test; PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; S = Slosson Oral Reading Test; suffix 1 = pretest.

Reading Comprehension

Comparisons of the means for GM1, GM2, GM3, and GM4 for control and experimental groups show that both groups made steady gains in reading comprehension from pretest through to follow-up test (Table 3; Figure 1). The greatest gains, however, occurred between the pretest and midtest for both groups. For the control group the gain almost doubled; for the experimental group it more than doubled. One explanation for this is the pretest was given in September and when this

test is given early in the school year rather than a month or two into the school year, the fall norms tend to underestimate student achievement (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1992). It appears that the pretest scores for each group should be higher than actually shown. What is most important for this study, however, is this difference is consistent for each of the groups.

Comparisons of the mean gains from GM1 through to GM4 show that the experimental group achieved consistently higher than the control group (Figure 1; Table 3). The total mean gain for the experimental group from GM1 to GM4 was 28.30; for the control group it was 16.87 (Table 3). Also, the gain for the control group from GM2 to GM3 was 2.86; however, for the experimental group this gain was 9.70. This would seem to be quite a plus for the treatment provided. These gains definitely lend support for accepting hypothesis one.

It is also interesting to note that when the follow-up test (GM4) was given three months after the program ended, the experimental group made a gain of 5.30 as compared to a gain of 2.44 for the control group (Table 3). This tends to show that the program had enduring positive effects with respect to reading comprehension. However, the gain from GM3 to GM4 (5.30) for the experimental group was about five points less than the gain from GM2 to GM3 (9.70). This tends to support

the need for a longer period of parental assistance from teachers as far as helping children with reading comprehension is concerned.

Table 3

Comparisons of Means for Pretest through to Follow-up Test Scores on Gates-MacGinitie Test by Group

	<u>Control (n=7)</u>			<u>Experimental (n=7)</u>		
Variable	Mean	S.D.	Gain	Mean	S.D.	Gain
GM1	12.14	5.21	-	12.71	6.90	-
GM2	23.71	6.47	11.57	26.01	8.29	13.30
GM3	26.57	7.35	2.86	35.71	6.37	9.70
GM4	29.01	7.64	2.44	41.01	3.46	5.30
	Total Gain		16.87	Total Gain		28.30

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test; suffixes 1,2,3,4 = pretest, midtest, posttest, and follow-up test, respectively.

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test				
	GM1	GM2	GM3	GM4
Control	12.14	23.71	26.57	29.01
Experimental	12.71	26.01	35.71	41.01

Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test

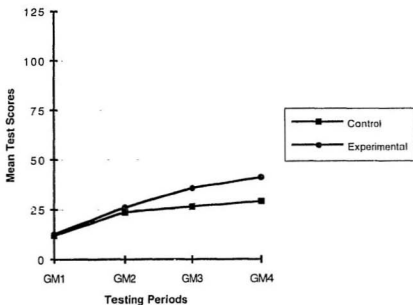


Figure 1. Comparisons of Mean Gains on Gates-MacGinitie Test Scores by Group

Note. GM = Gates-MacGinitie Test; suffixes 1, 2, 3, 4 = pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test, respectively.

Receptive Vocabulary

Comparisons of the means for PPVT1, PPVT2, PPVT3 and PPVT4 show a steady increase over time for both experimental and control groups in receptive vocabulary (Table 4; Figure 2). The experimental group, however, made over twice as many gains as the control group from pretest to midtest and from midtest to posttest. From posttest to follow-up test, the gains for the experimental group over the control group were even greater. This accounts for quite a substantial total gain for the experimental group (22.58) over the control group (6.85). It therefore seems that the second hypothesis for this study will be accepted.

Contrary to what might be expected, the gains for both experimental and control groups were slightly less from midtest (PPVT2) to posttest (PPVT3) than from pretest (PPVT1) to midtest (PPVT2). As was the case with the Gates-MacGinitie Test results, this may be due to slightly inappropriate timing for test administration. Again, what is most significant for this study is these slight differences are consistent for each of the groups.

It is also interesting to note that the experimental group made the greatest gains on the follow-up test (PPVT4) three months after the treatment had ended (Table 4; Figure 2). One explanation for this could be a "lagged" effect, which means the effects of the program might not have been

fully felt until months after it was terminated. This also suggests that parents continued with the treatment after the program ended.

Table 4

Comparisons of Means for Pretest through to Follow-up Test
Scores on Peabody Test by Group

Variable	<u>Control(n=7)</u>			<u>Experimental(n=7)</u>		
	Mean	S.D.	Gain	Mean	S.D.	Gain
PPVT1	82.29	9.86	-	85.71	9.23	-
PPVT2	85.57	10.13	3.28	93.01	8.33	7.30
PPVT3	87.86	6.87	2.29	98.86	7.43	5.85
PPVT4	89.14	9.49	1.28	108.29	7.57	9.43
	Total Gain		6.85	Total Gain		22.58

Note. PPVT= Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; suffixes 1,2,3,4 = pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test, respectively.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test				
	PPVT1	PPVT2	PPVT3	PPVT4
Control	82.29	85.57	87.86	89.14
Experimental	85.71	93.01	98.86	108.29

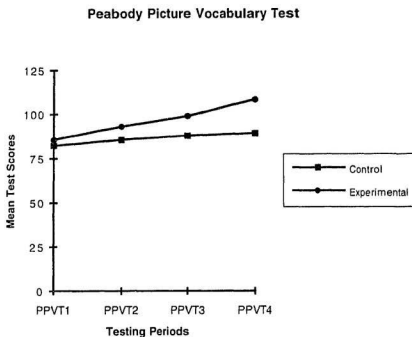


Figure 2. Comparisons of Mean Gains on Peabody Test Scores by Group

Note. PPVT = Peabody Test; suffixes 1, 2, 3, 4 = pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test, respectively.

Sight Vocabulary

Both experimental and control groups also made steady gains on sight vocabulary from pretest through to follow-up test (Table 5); however, the gains were considerably greater for the experimental group (Figure 3). This should certainly favour accepting hypothesis three of the study.

The large gain for the experimental group over the control group from S1 to S2 (Table 5) could partially be explained by the fact that the experimental group had about a five point advantage at the outset of the study on this variable. Most of the gain, however, would seem to have resulted from the effectiveness of the program on this variable at the earlier stages of the study.

The enduring positive effects of the program is also noteworthy for this variable. The gain from S3 to S4 for the experimental group after the treatment had ended was greater than the gain from S2 to S3 when the treatment was in progress. Again, this could have been caused by a "lagged" effect of the treatment. It also suggests that once the parents were trained to assist their children, they not only had the interest and desire but also the ability to operate independently.

Table 5

Comparisons of Means for Pretest through to Follow-up Test Scores On Slosson Test by Group

Variable	<u>Control (n=7)</u>			<u>Experimental (n=7)</u>		
	Mean	S.D.	Gain	Mean	S.D.	Gain
S1	27.44	15.60	-	32.14	26.93	-
S2	34.29	18.66	6.85	49.14	29.00	17.00
S3	44.86	21.44	10.57	70.14	25.88	21.00
S4	56.43	27.98	11.57	100.14	32.92	30.00
	Total Gain		28.99	Total Gain		68.00

Note. S = Slosson Oral Reading Test; suffixes 1,2,3,4 = pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test, respectively.

According to these statistics, it therefore appears that no biasing factors existed between experimental and control groups at the beginning of this study and the design of the study seems to be sound. They also supply very convincing evidence that all three hypotheses of the study will indeed be accepted.

Slosson Oral Reading Test				
	S1	S2	S3	S4
Control	27.44	34.29	44.86	56.43
Experimental	32.14	49.14	70.14	100.14

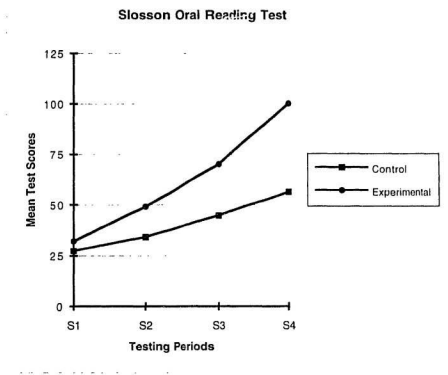


Figure 3. Comparisons of Mean Gains on Slosson Test Scores by Group

Note. S = Slosson Test; suffixes 1, 2, 3, 4 = pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test, respectively.

Analysis of Variance

A series of ANOVAS were designed to accomplish two specific purposes: (1) to confirm whether or not the two dichotomous variables, gender and group, were biasing factors at the beginning of the study and (2) to reject or accept any or all of the three hypotheses of the study.

The significance level for these ANOVAS was set in advance at 0.1. This level ($p < 0.1$) is an acceptable cut off for exploratory studies involving small sample sizes such as this (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Gender and Group Tests

The one way ANOVAS designed on pretest (raw) scores and gender indicate a no difference level of significance for GM1 and S1 at the cut off level of 0.1 (Table 6). It can therefore be confirmed that gender did not seem to be a discriminatory factor at the outset of this experiment as far as reading comprehension and sight vocabulary were concerned. The ANOVAS for group and GM1, PPVT1 and S1 (Table 7) indicate that the null hypothesis of no difference between the experimental and control groups on reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary at the outset of the study cannot be rejected.

Table 6
Analysis of Variance: Gender and Pretest Scores

Variable	Source	SS	DF	MS	F
GM1	1	.595	1	.595	.016
	2	448.833	12	37.403	
PPVT1	1	337.167	1	337.167	5.065*
	2	798.833	12	66.569	
S1	1	87.149	1	87.149	.180
	2	5803.208	12	483.601	

Note. Source 1 = between groups, Source 2 = within groups.

* $p < 0.1$

The same conclusion, however, cannot be reached for PPVT1 and gender (Table 6). In this case, the differences between boys and girls are significant at the 0.1 level. This means that girls, who had the higher mean on this test (Table 1), had significant advantages over boys in terms of receptive vocabulary when this study began.

Table 7
Analysis of Variance: Group and Pretest Scores

Variable	Source	SS	DF	MS	F
GM1	1	1.143	1	1.143	.031
	2	448.286	12	37.357	
PPVT1	1	41.143	1	41.143	.451
	2	1094.857	12	91.238	
S1	1	77.786	1	77.786	.161
	2	5812.571	12	484.381	

Note. Source 1 = between groups, Source 2 = within groups.

Hypotheses Tests

The three hypotheses for this study were as follows:

Hypotheses 1: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in reading comprehension than a control group.

Hypotheses 2: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in receptive vocabulary than a control group.

Hypotheses 3: As a result of involvement in a highly interactive reading program with their mothers, an experimental group of grade two children will make greater gains in sight vocabulary than a control group.

One way ANOVAS using raw scores for reading comprehension by group were done at four different intervals - pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up test. The relationships between group membership and GM1 and GM2 were not significant (Table 8). By posttest time (GM3), however, the differences were significant at the 0.1 level and the alternative or research hypothesis was supported. By the time of the follow-up test, the gap between the experimental and control groups has widened and the differences were significant at the 0.01 level. This supported the enduring positive effects of the treatment. Hypothesis #1 was therefore accepted.

Table 8

Analysis of Variance: Group and Gates-MacGinitie Test Scores

Variable	Source	SS	DF	MS	F	ETA	ETA ²
GM1	1	1.143	1	1.143	.031	.050	.003
	2	448.286	12	37.357			
GM2	1	18.286	1	18.286	.331	.164	.027
	2	663.429	12	55.286			
GM3	1	292.571	1	292.571	6.190*	.583	.340
	2	567.143	12	47.262			
GM4	1	504.000	1	504.000	14.332**	.738	.544
	2	422.000	12	35.167			

Note. Source 1 = between groups, Source 2 = within groups.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.01$

The one way ANOVAS designed for receptive and sight vocabulary yielded similar results. PPVT2 (Table 9) and S2 (Table 10) and group membership were not significant at the 0.1 level, but according to the increasing F-ratios, the findings were in the hypothesized direction. However, for PPVT3 and S3 the differences between control and experimental

groups were significant at the 0.1 level with the gap widening and becoming significant at the 0.01 for PPVT4. Hypotheses #2 and #3 were therefore accepted.

Table 9
Analysis of Variance: Group and Peabody Test Scores

Variable	Source	SS	DF	MS	F	ETA	ETA ²
PPVT1	1	41.143	1	41.143	.451	.190	.036
	2	1094.857	12	91.238			
PPVT2	1	193.143	1	193.143	2.247	.397	.158
	2	1031.714	12	85.976			
PPVT3	1	423.500	1	423.500	8.281*	.639	.408
	2	613.714	12	51.143			
PPVT4	1	1282.571	1	1282.572	17.405**	.769	.592
	2	884.286	12	73.691			

Note. Source 1 = between groups, Source 2 = within groups.

*p< 0.1, **p< 0.01

The increasing eta coefficients from pretest through to follow-up test for each dependent variable also support the positive effects of the program on these variables and further support the acceptance of all three hypotheses included in this study.

Table 10
Analysis of Variance: Group and Slosson Test Scores

Variable	Source	SS	DF	MS	F	ETA	ETA ²
S1	1	77.786	1	77.786	.161	.115	.013
	2	5812.571	12	484.381			
S2	1	772.571	1	772.571	1.299	.313	.098
	2	7136.286	12	594.691			
S3	1	2237.786	1	2237.786	3.962*	.498	.248
	2	6777.714	12	564.810			
S4	1	6688.286	1	6688.286	7.168*	.612	.374
	2	11196.571	12	933.048			

Note. Source 1 = between groups, Source 2 = within groups.

*p< 0.1

Correlation Analysis

To further confirm the results of these ANOVAS, the researcher conducted a correlations analysis. This involved using a correlation matrix of all variables included in the study (Table 11).

The correlations between GM1 and gender (.036), and S1 and gender(.122) are not significant; however, the correlation between PPVT1 and gender (.545) is significant at the 0.1 level. The correlations between group and GM1, PPVT1 and S1 are .050, .190 and .115, respectively; however, not one is significant. This confirms previous findings regarding the soundness of the design.

The posttest variables, GM3, PPVT3 and S3 and group have correlations of .583, .639 and .498, respectively. These correlations are significant at the 0.1 level for group and GM3 and S3; however, for group and PPVT3, the correlation is significant even at the 0.01 level. The correlation between group and S4 is .612 which is significant at the 0.01 level. The correlation between group and GM4 is .738; between group and PPVT4 it is .769. These correlations are even significant at the 0.001 level. This confirms previous findings regarding the acceptance of the three hypotheses included in this study.

Table 11

Correlation Matrix: Pretest through to Follow-up Test Items

	Group	Gender	GM1	PPVT1	S1
Group	1.0000				
Gender	.0000	1.0000			
GM1	.0504	.0364	1.0000		
PPVT1	.1903	.5448*	.5290*	1.0000	
S1	.1149	.1216	.2331	.4361*	1.0000
GM2	.1638	.2453	.8218***	.4943*	.0178
PPVT2	.3971*	.4828*	.4856*	.9088***	.2948
S2	.3125	.1197	.3107	.4797*	.9619***
GM3	.5834*	.0579	.7917***	.4898*	.1895
PPVT3	.6390**	.4168*	.3616	.7720***	.1404
S3	.4982*	.0455	.3383	.4118*	.8841***
GM4	.7378***	.0532	.6030*	.4622*	.2042
PPVT4	.7694***	.2635	.2956	.6603**	.1344
S4	.6115**	-.0231	.3105	.4013*	.8060***
Mean	1.500	1.429	12.429	84.000	29.786
S.D.	.519	.514	5.800	9.348	21.286

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, S = Slosson Oral Reading Test; suffixes 1,2,3,4 indicate pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up tests, respectively.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 11 (continued)

Correlation Matrix: Pretest through to Follow-up Test Items

	GM2	PPVT2	S2	GM3	PPVT3
Group					
Gender					
GM1					
PPVT1					
S1					
GM2	1.0000				
PPVT2	.5248*	1.0000			
S2	.1488.	.4065*	1.0000		
GM3	.7306**	.5754*	.3450	1.0000	
PPVT3	.4646*	.9099***	.3050	.6050*	1.0000
S3	.2041	.3936*	.9596***	.4885*	.3422
GM4	.5563*	.5784*	.3618	.9482***	.6428**
PPVT4	.3459	.8508***	.3080	.6518**	.9521***
S4	.1425	.3984*	.9016***	.5400*	.4106*
<hr/>					
Means	24.857	89.286	41.714	31.143	93.357
S.D.	7.242	9.707	24.665	8.132	8.392

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, S = Slosson Oral Reading Test; suffixes 1,2,3,4 indicate pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up tests, respectively.

*p< 0.1, **p< 0.01, ***p< 0.001

Table 11 (continued)

Correlation Matrix: Pretest through to Follow-up Test Items

	S3	GM4	PPVT4	S4
Group				
Gender				
GM1				
PPVT1				
S1				
GM2				
PPVT2				
S2				
GM3				
PPVT3				
S3	1.0000			
GM4	.5216*	1.0000		
PPVT4	.3853*	.7462***	1.0000	
S4	.9702***	.6060*	.4773*	1.0000
Means	57.500	35.000	98.714	78.286
S.D.	26.334	8.440	12.911	37.091

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, S = Slosson Oral Reading Test. suffixes 1,2,3,4 indicate pretest, midtest, posttest and follow-up tests, respectively.

*p< 0.1, **p< 0.01, ***p< 0.001

Discussion

The ANOVA conducted on gender and the dependent variable, PPVT1, confirmed that girls had a significant advantage over boys on receptive vocabulary at the beginning of the study. This discrepancy, however, should not seriously affect the outcomes of this study since the researcher did not design it to see if one gender would do better than another on the program provided and gender was a variable on which the pairs were matched. What is far more important to the objectivity of the study is that no bias was found to exist between the experimental and control groups on the dependent variables at the beginning. With respect to its ability to objectively test the hypotheses included in this study, the design of this experiment was therefore found to be sound.

The fact that all three working hypotheses were accepted at posttest time also suggests that the theories on which this research was based were also sound. Most importantly, by follow-up test time, three months after the program had terminated, significant gains continued to be made on reading comprehension, meaning and sight vocabulary. This gives added support to the soundness of these theories. It also supports similar research findings and propositions on which these theories were based.

In reviewing research done on parent involvement and reading achievement, Silvern (1985) claimed that the two most

effective practices parents can engage in to promote literacy development in their children are reading to them and listening to them read. Studies have also shown that the effectiveness of these practices depends significantly on the quality of the parent-child interactions (Flood, 1977; Teale, 1978; Morrow, 1988). Such research supports the theory that discussing, and asking and answering questions on books being read, are effective interactions in guiding children to extract meaning from print. Similarly, there is a school of educators who support the theory that getting children to sample, predict, test, confirm and self-correct where necessary when reading, as opposed to using phonics, is most effective in helping children read (Stauffer, 1968; Smith, 1982; Goodman, 1986). Besides, studies have found that using praise and similar positive interactions can have significant influences on early reading achievement (Silvern, 1978; Topping, 1985). Studies of early readers have demonstrated the critical importance of having appropriate children's literature in promoting literacy development (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976). Because this study heavily involved all these practices and interactions, it would therefore tend to support these past research findings and propositions.

The results of this study also reinforce the findings of other research that found parent-teacher partnerships in literacy development to be significantly effective (Becher,

1982; Silvern, 1985). Besides, this study involved all low SES parents. It found that once shown how, these parents were anxious and pleased to cooperate in helping their children with reading. This supports the findings of similar research on low SES parents (Beveridge and Jerrams, 1981; Weinberger et al., 1986; Neuman and Gallagher, 1994).

Because this study adhered to the findings of research and experience on how to effectively involve parents in partnership programs with teachers, its results would also tend to support these findings. This included: not talking at but with parents, having clear and concise guidelines for them to follow and giving them praise and feelings of success throughout the program (Topping, 1985); utilizing one-to-one relationships, specific objectives and monitoring devices and highly structured tasks for parents (Becher, 1986); being consistent and systematic but informal and ensuring appropriateness of materials (Rasinski, 1994) and making frequent home contacts (Neuman and Gallagher, 1994).

Reading Ability

To get some indication of the effects of the program on students of different reading ability, the researcher selected from the experimental group the student with the lowest ability at pretest time and the one with the highest ability. Gains made on raw test scores for each of the dependent

variables from pretest to follow-up test for each student were then compared. Follow-up instead of posttest scores were used because they revealed enduring effects of the program and were therefore more significant.

On reading comprehension (GM) there was a 11 point difference in gain at follow-up test time in favour of the lower ability student (Table 12). The lower ability student

Table 12
Comparisons of Program Effects on Reading Ability

Dependent Variable	Ability Source	<u>Test Scores</u>		
		Pretest	Follow-up Test	Gain
GM	Lower	3	38	35
	Higher	21	45	24
PPVT	Lower	69	93	24
	Higher	98	110	12
S	Lower	5	66	61
	Higher	82	156	74

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, S = Slosson Oral Reading Test.

doubled the gain the higher ability student made at follow-up test time on receptive vocabulary (PPVT). These gains, however, could have resulted from regression towards the mean for the lower ability student. The higher ability student made a gain difference of 13 points over the lower ability student on sight vocabulary (S).

It therefore appears that the program could have been more effective for lower ability students on reading comprehension and receptive vocabulary, but for sight vocabulary it could have been more beneficial to higher ability students.

Gender

To ascertain possible effects of the program on gender, the mean gains made by the boys in the experimental group between pretest and follow-up test times on each of the dependent variables were compared to the same gains made by the girls in the experimental group. Again, follow-up test scores were used because of their greater enduring effects over posttest scores.

On reading comprehension, members of each gender made identical gains of 28 points (Table 13). On receptive vocabulary boys made a gain of four points over girls. This is a very interesting finding because it was already discovered that girls had significant advantages over boys at the beginning of the study on this variable. Also, despite

the fact that girls had an eight-point advantage over boys on sight vocabulary at the beginning of the study, by follow-up test time boys had a three point advantage over girls. This demonstrates that the program could have great potential for remediation on these variables for boys.

Table 13
Comparisons of Program Effects on Gender

Dependent Variable	Gender Source	<u>Mean Test Scores</u>		
		Pretest	Follow-up Test	Gain
GM	Boys	13	41	28
	Girls	13	41	28
PPVT	Boys	81	105	24
	Girls	92	112	20
S	Boys	29	98	69
	Girls	37	103	66

Note. GM = Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, PPVT = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, S = Slosson Oral Reading Test.

Reading Attitude

To produce lifelong readers, it is important that the home and school not only teach children how to read but also to want to read. As a result, this study also aimed to ascertain the effectiveness of the program on this affective dimension. Toward this end, the researcher administered an adaptation of the Inventory of Reading Attitude developed by Vogt et al. (cited in Howes, 1963) to each student in both experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study and three months following the end of the program (Appendix H). A "yes" response on this Inventory reflected a positive attitude towards reading, a "no" response reflected a negative attitude.

Out of a total possible 84 responses, the control group reported 42 positive responses at pretest time (Table 14). At the same time, the experimental group reported 35 positive responses (Table 15). At the outset of the study, the control group therefore appeared to generally have a more positive attitude towards reading than did the experimental group. By follow-up test time, the control group reported virtually no difference from pretest results. However, the number of positive responses increased from 35 at pretest time to 79 at follow-up test time for the experimental group. This revealed that the program had very significant effects on developing more positive attitudes and interests in children towards reading.

Table 14
Inventory of Reading Attitude Results: Control Group

Question	<u>Pretest</u>		<u>Follow - up</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you like to read before you go to bed?	5	2	6	1
2. Do you like to read when mother and father are reading?	2	5	3	4
3. Is reading your favourite subject at school?	0	7	0	7
4. If you could do anything you wanted to do, would reading be one of the things you would choose to do?	1	6	2	5
5. Do you think that you are a good reader for your age?	6	1	5	2
6. Do you like to read aloud for other children at school?	7	0	6	1
7. Do you like to read all kinds of books at school?	3	4	3	4
8. Do you like to answer questions about things you have read?	4	3	2	5
9. Do you like to talk about books you have read?	5	2	5	2
10. Does reading make you feel good?	6	1	5	2
11. Do you feel that reading time is the best part of the school day?	0	7	0	7
12. Would you like to have more books to read?	3	4	4	3
Total	42	42	41	43

Table 15

Inventory of Reading Attitude Results: Experimental Group

Question	Follow - up			
	Pretest		Test	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you like to read before you go to bed?	5	2	7	0
2. Do you like to read when mother and father are reading?	1	6	6	1
3. Is reading your favourite subject at school?	1	6	5	2
4. If you could do anything you wanted to do, would reading be one of the things you would choose to do?	1	6	7	0
5. Do you think that you are a good reader for your age?	5	2	7	0
6. Do you like to read aloud for other children at school?	6	1	7	0
7. Do you like to read all kinds of books at school?	1	6	7	0
8. Do you like to answer questions about things you have read?	2	5	7	0
9. Do you like to talk about books you have read?	5	2	7	0
10. Does reading make you feel good?	4	3	7	0
11. Do you feel that reading time is the best part of the school day?	1	6	5	2
12. Would you like to have more books to read?	3	4	7	0
Total	35	49	79	5

Parents' Response to Program

All seven parents of the experimental group returned the questionnaire at about follow-up test time signifying their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program on their children's reading behaviours, and their general reaction to the program (Appendix I). All seven reported that their children had developed more confidence and a greater interest in reading, and the process of reading with their children had become more enjoyable. These observations were supported by the fact that all parents perceived that their children spent more time reading, read more and a greater variety of books and displayed a greater understanding of books.

With respect to specific child behaviours while engaged in book reading, some differences in parent observations were reported. Six perceived that their children read with more expression while one reported no difference in this behaviour. Five perceived that their children liked to discuss ideas in a book after reading it, the other two reported no perceived difference in this area. Four observed their children's liking to make predictions while reading a story; however, three reported no change regarding this behaviour. Three perceived their children's liking to talk more about the cover, illustrations and title of a book before reading it; three observed no change on this characteristic and one reported her child not wanting to engage in this behaviour.

It is interesting to note that only two of the parents observed their children's using context clues to discover unknown words. The other five reported that their children used the "sounding out" process in their attempts to learn unknown words. This could have resulted from the fact that once behaviour becomes entrenched, it is usually difficult to change, especially in a short time frame. Changing such actions would seem to require a longer assistance program.

Parental observations of the program in general were very positive. All seven parents rated the effectiveness of the study to be excellent. Two thought the book selection process to be excellent, four perceived it to be very good and the other found it to be good. Most importantly, all seven reported that they will continue to help their children with reading from five to seven nights per week.

When asked how they felt this program could have been improved, all expressed total satisfaction with it and recommended or implied keeping it as is. One parent wrote, "I am very pleased with the results of this study. I will make sure that I will be always there to help my child with reading. It will come in handy when his brother starts to read." Another requested, "If at all possible, could this be extended for another year?" A third claimed, "I don't think [my child] could have improved any more than he did in such a short time. Before this [he] more than likely would not have

been promoted to Grade Three but now I really think he will". A fourth observed that this program, "helped me to understand what I need to do with [my child] to help her in the future." Finally, another parent said that her child is "now a very avid reader and she enjoys her books. I just wish this program was going on when my older son was at this age. There should be more of this in the schools".

These positive comments further supported the overall success of the program. The reports that students developed greater confidence and interest in reading, found reading to be more enjoyable and read more, confirm the significant increases in attitude towards reading developed by the experimental group as disclosed by the Inventory of Reading Attitudes for students (Tables 14 and 15). The fact that all parents reported that they would continue to help their children with reading also supports the enduring positive effects found to be associated with the program. However, it would appear that behaviours which have become entrenched in habit, such as using phonics to correct miscues, may very well require more than a fourteen week ameliorative program to initiate desired changes.

Summary of Findings

This study was based on past research findings of parent involvement and reading achievement, including revealed

effective parent practices and parent-child interactions. It also took into account the findings of past studies on how to effectively involve parents in parent-teacher programs designed toward promoting literacy in young children. All three of its hypotheses were accepted at posttest time and re-confirmed at follow-up test time. This convincingly demonstrated the effects the program involved in this study had and very likely will continue to have on increasing children's abilities in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary. The students' response to the program as revealed through the results of the Inventory of Reading Attitude also showed that the same program apparently increased children's desire to read.

The parents very positive responses to the program, including their optimistic perceptions of its effectiveness on their children's reading behaviours and their expression of long-term commitment to continuing it, support the other findings of this study. This lends further support to the past research on teacher-parent partnerships in literacy development on which this study was based. It supplies further convincing evidence to support the theory that once parents know how to help, they can and will significantly assist their children in literacy development.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary

This study did a comparison of the gains made in reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary by an experimental and a control group of grade two students. The purpose was to involve parents of the experimental group in developing and implementing an interactive reading program which aimed to show them how to more effectively help their children with reading. This program was based on the findings of past research on parental involvement in reading, including effective practices and parent-child interactions. It was of 14 weeks' duration and involved students attending a primary school in Conception Bay North, Newfoundland.

A pretest-midtest-posttest-follow-up test control group design with matching was used in the study. From a total population of 80 students, seven pairs were matched on the basis of gender, age, socio-economic status and reading ability. Reading ability was determined by observations of teachers who worked with these children for at least one year. All 14 students in the sample came from low socio-economic backgrounds. One member of each pair of students was randomly assigned to the experimental group, the other was placed in the control group. Three one way ANOVAS conducted on the

dependent variables at pretest time confirmed the soundness of this design.

Only parents of the experimental group were exposed to the assistance program. Both experimental and control groups continued to receive regular classroom instruction. Teachers had a general awareness of the study; however, they were not given any specific details about its content or form. Parents of the control group were not made aware of the treatment provided to the experimental group by the researcher.

By midtest time, the impact of the program on reading comprehension, receptive vocabulary and sight vocabulary was in the hypothesized direction. By posttest time, it was statistically significant on each of these three dependent variables at the 0.1 level. By follow-up test time, about three months after the program had ended, the impact was significant at the 0.01 level on reading comprehension and receptive vocabulary and remained significant at the 0.1 level for sight vocabulary. These results indicate that the program was not only successful in significantly assisting parents with their children's literacy development but most importantly once they acquired the "know how" to help, they continued to assist at a higher degree of success after the program had terminated.

The researcher also administered an Inventory of Reading Attitude (Appendix H) before the program began and after it

terminated. The results showed that the program apparently had a considerable effect on increasing students' positive attitudes towards reading. The results of a questionnaire given to parents after the program ended (Appendix I) also indicated that they perceived the program to be effective in not only helping their children with reading during the interim but also in assisting them with the "know how" to continue helping on a daily basis after the program ended.

Considerable evidence was therefore found to support the success of the program in assisting parents with the expertise to enhance the reading levels of their children. These findings should have very significant implications for school administrators and teachers and parents, especially those associated with pre-school and primary school children.

Implications

Being able to work one-to-one with their children for longer and more flexible periods of time in more familiar, warm, intimate, informal and natural settings, parents are strategically positioned to be more effective teachers of their children than are regular teachers. They also have the right and the responsibility to help with their children's education. Moreover, the learning environment in the school is simply an extension of the learning environment in the home and parents and teachers share common educational goals for

children. Besides, parents are the one continuous force in the education of their children and schools usually have more contact with them than any other group or agency. As a result, parents should help with the formal educational process of their children. Some do help. Most want to help. The problem is many lack the expertise to help.

The results of this study show clearly that with proper training parents can develop the required expertise to help their children significantly with literacy development. More importantly, these results show that once they develop this expertise, they become eager to help and continue providing high quality assistance after their training terminates. Most importantly, they assist their children not only in how to read but also in wanting to read, essential requirements for lifelong readers.

The greatest need for such assistance seems to exist among parents of low socio-economic status. With limited needs for literacy in their everyday activities, they usually interact with their children in ways that do not promote literacy development. This could result in a very serious problem of intergenerational illiteracy. Some people are of the opinion that such parent-child interactions are static characteristics (Neuman and Gallagher, 1994). This research, however, included all low SES parents. It supports the contrasting view that communicative processes existing between

such parents and their children are indeed alterable through proper training. In the same manner, it offers assurance that cycles of intergenerational illiteracy can indeed be broken through such training.

In an age when society is placing ever increasing demands on the small amount of time teachers do share with children and when it is becoming more obvious that the school acting alone cannot solve our serious illiteracy problem, the need for such programs as included in this study would seem to be great. In this province, which has the highest illiteracy rate in the country and where intergenerational illiteracy appears to be chronic, the need for such parent-teacher programs would appear to be most acute. This is especially true for teachers and parents of pre-school and primary school aged children who interact with these children during the prime time for learning, especially language learning. It is also their prime responsibility to develop a literacy-based foundation for later learning.

For quite some time schools have been introducing reform after reform in attempting to improve their performance. This is especially true in the area of literacy. Much time, energy and money have been expended in the process. Recently, whole language, and resource based teaching have become popular practices. In an attempt to remedy literacy and learning problems, considerable emphasis has been placed also on

special education services and programs. However, according to our high illiteracy rate, such reforms are not producing the desired results. The poor performance of our students on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills during the past 20 years could certainly attest to this in this province (Profile '93). It could be that schools cannot do much more than they are doing within the allocated time frames, especially if the foundation on which reforms are built is weak. As a result, educational reforms may not succeed if parents are not trained to act in partnerships with teachers, especially primary teachers.

Besides, expending time, energy and money in providing special education services, remedial programs and other educational reforms in schools in an attempt to solve our illiteracy and learning problems, is not getting at the root of these problems. They are, in most cases, only superficial, patchwork attempts at resolution. By training parents to assist with children's literacy development in the home, we would be getting at the root of our illiteracy problem and placing emphasis on prevention as well as cure. At the same time, we would be establishing a stronger foundation on which to build other formal educational reforms or eliminating the need for their existence in the first place. Time, energy and money diverted in this direction would apparently be well

spent. The ensuing individual and social benefits could indeed be great.

This study is therefore simply suggesting what other research has been telling us for decades. That is the greatest potential in resolving serious illiteracy problems lies in schools' developing and implementing greater partnerships with parents in literacy development. Apparently, the United States government has finally realized this. Basing its actions on this research, it has recently announced major initiatives to involve parents in education, especially in the area of literacy.

The Educate America Act, 1994, calls for every school in the country to initiate partnerships with parents by the year 2000 (Handel, 1995). Toward realizing this goal, the U.S. Department of Education has requested US \$10 million to establish parent resource centres in every state. As a result, school initiated family literacy programs are beginning to spring up all over the country. Also, plans have already been made to establish a 21st Century Head Start Program (Rowe, 1994). Such actions have resulted from the belief that, "literacy skills and practices are transmitted from one generation to the next, and the need to break the cycle of underachievement in educationally and economically disadvantaged populations" (Handel, p. 16. 1995).

The findings of this study strongly suggest that similar actions be taken by the federal and provincial governments of this country. Again, the need appears to be greatest in this province. The resulting gains in establishing stable economic growth, increased productivity and employment and decreasing crime and welfare dependency would appear to be indeed worth the time, money and effort. Our survival as a province and a nation in a rapidly increasing knowledge-based and highly technological world community may suggest that we have no alternative.

Even without government support, this study implies that school boards, councils, administrators, teachers and any other people responsible for the education of children, should take the initiative in developing and implementing assistance programs to help parents under their jurisdiction enhance their children's literacy development. This should be a basic criterion in the establishment of effective schools. Again, the need for such action is obviously greatest in primary schools. As already implied, taking some of the emphasis in terms of time, energy and money off existing special education and remedial programs and services in schools and re-directing it towards parent assistance programs in the home could be explored as a real possibility.

In addition to offering suggestions on why such parent assistance programs should be implemented, this study also

contains some very significant implications regarding what to include in such programs and how they should be developed and implemented. Such programs should be both informational and training based. At the beginning, it is recommended that information be provided on the vital role parents do and can play in the general education of their children, especially in the area of literacy development, the advantages they have over regular school teachers as teachers of their children and the need for parent-teacher partnerships in enhancing literacy achievement. This would seem to be necessary because many parents are unaware of such information. This should be followed by outlining specific practices and interactions they should engage in with their children to help them with reading.

As exemplified by this study, any program aimed at assisting anyone to help young children with reading must emphasize the extremely powerful effects which reading to children and listening to children read have on developing their general ability to read. Teachers and parents involved with such programs have to realize the importance of allocating quality time each day to engage in these two essential practices. Both must realize that these interactions are priorities in terms of time management, and if they care enough, they will find the time.

Although these highly recommended practices can be effective in themselves, it should be pointed out that their effectiveness can be significantly enhanced by using high quality interactions which are cognitive in nature. Asking and answering questions by both parent and child and engaging in discussion about books being read are important in helping children link new experiences with known ones and thereby extract meaning from print. This is what reading is all about. Also, getting children to read in context by sampling, predicting, confirming and self-correcting, where necessary, is important in developing comprehension skills and independence in reading. The critical importance of using praise and positive reinforcement for efforts made, especially during initial attempts at reading must be emphasized.

Most parents tend to emphasize traditional "skill drill" and phonics methods in attempting to help their children with reading. Very often, the poorest readers become exposed to the heaviest doses of phonics and skills instruction and consequently spend the least time on the very objective - READING (Trelease, 1985). It is therefore important to instruct parents to use these methods only as last resorts, for they tend to detract from reading for meaning and turn children off from reading. It is important that parents let children know early that there is more to reading than practising blendings and vowel sounds.

The success of the program included in this research was due in large measure to the fact that parents and children had access to a large supply of appropriate children's literature. This is critical to the success of any such program. Parents also have to be trained in the principles of appropriate book selection. This is necessary to ensure that children are exposed to books that suit their interest and ability levels. To nurture the development of independence in proper book selection, children should be encouraged also to select some books themselves.

This study also suggests that when teachers and educators do involve parents in partnership programs, it is important to follow specific practices which this and similar research have found to be effective. From the beginning and throughout, it is important that parents feel comfortable and relaxed and any fears or feelings of nervousness are crushed. The researcher found that socialization over a cup of coffee before sessions began and during breaks was helpful in this respect. Also, setting an informal atmosphere and talking with parents rather than at them from the beginning of the first session and throughout were found to be helpful.

Rather than imposing the program or aspects of it on parents, it is strongly suggested that they be extensively involved in its development. Teachers should realize that as child-rearing practitioners, parents can have expert advice to

offer to teachers and to the program. Involving them in the program development is also important in getting them to identify with and acquire a sense of ownership of it. The researcher found that attempting to draw desired information from parents and telling them only when there was a need was very helpful in this respect.

As is usually the case with developing any program, the researcher found that it pays to have well-thought out action plans and to be well organized. Having clear objectives to map the way and concise, concrete guidelines which parents can easily understand and follow are very important. Possessing pre-determined and effective monitoring devices to ensure that expectations are carried out appropriately and facilitate continuous evaluation of the program is also essential. The researcher, for example, found that having taped excerpts of parents-child book readings served as an excellent monitoring device. Involving parents in developing the aims, guidelines and expectations tends to facilitate their understanding and acceptance of them.

The need for large group meetings is usually met after the program development and dissemination of general information stages are completed. During the implementation stage, it is advised that the teacher meet with each parent-child group separately at least once per week. Besides, a means of daily communication, usually by telephone or home

visitation, should be established between teacher and each parent. This researcher found these meetings and home contacts to be crucial to ensuring program success. They provided several necessary functions, including: further monitoring and evaluating progress made; resolving any deficiencies with respect to program expectations; making necessary changes in the program to suit individual situations; giving parents the necessary feelings of success with efforts and progress made and establishing further rapport, trust, and on going dialogue with them as they interacted in new ways with their children. These weekly meetings also provided opportunities to ensure that children and parents had sufficient and appropriate children's books from week to week.

As this study further suggests, all scheduled meetings should take place in the school library or resource center where parents and their children are surrounded with good quality children's literature. This not only provides a literacy-based atmosphere for the literacy-based program but also facilitates easy access to appropriate books for all participants before, during and after meetings.

Finally, parental responses to this program indicated that in some cases programs involving longer periods of time may be necessary to change more entrenched behaviours of children and parents, such as using phonics to analyze

difficult words. In this respect certain aspects of a particular program could be prolonged as the need dictates. Continuous evaluation and careful monitoring of parent-child book-reading behaviours should determine such needs.

Limitations

The students involved in this study were selected from communities stretching from Bay Roberts East to Georgetown, a rural area of Newfoundland with a population approaching 10,000. Most of these students have lived in this area since birth. Since the area has a low migration rate, the findings may not be applicable to large urban areas with higher migration rates and a more varied cultural background.

Although the study used a controlled design, the sample was small and represented only one primary school in one rural area of the province. This limits the generalization of the findings of this investigation. Also, since only students of one grade level were used, the results obtained may not be general to other grade levels. Similarly, because the parents and students involved came from low socio-economic backgrounds, the results may not be general to middle and high socio-economic backgrounds.

The duration of the treatment on the experimental group was 14 weeks. Although a follow-up test was given to the students involved in the study later in the school year to

determine any enduring effects of the treatment, no provision was made for long term follow-up. As a result, it can only be assumed that there might be continuing effects into later grades.

Also, all parents involved in the experimental group had high school education and could read fluently to their children. The program on which this study is based is of little value to parents who cannot read to their children.

Finally, on the basis of this research, it cannot be assumed that any one factor, including scaffolding, contingent responsivity, exposure to appropriate literature, reading to children, listening to children read, or giving praise and encouragement for efforts made, was directly responsible for improvements in reading achievement and attitudes towards reading of the children involved. The improvements in students' reading abilities resulting from the program were apparently caused by a combination of such factors.

Suggestions for Further Research

To extend on the findings of this study and possibly overcome some of its limitations, the researcher would like to make several suggestions for further research. First, because the sample size involved in this study was restricted to select grade two students in one school in a rural area, it could be replicated using a different grade level in an urban

area. It could also be conducted using students from more than one grade. These grades could be representative of both rural and urban areas and therefore give the findings greater general applicability. Similarly, because the study involved only parents and students of low socio-economic backgrounds, it could also be replicated using participants of middle and high socio-economic backgrounds.

Although this study did involve a follow-up provision some three months after the program had terminated and some significant findings were discovered regarding the program's enduring effectiveness, a longer study using repeated measures over a two or three year period should produce more convincing and more reliable results. In such a study the possible effects of the program on success in reading related subjects, such as social studies, could be explored. Studies could also be done using longer periods of treatment to see what effects this would have on changing more entrenched parent-child reading behaviours, such as using phonics in word identification.

A similar study could be conducted using two experimental groups. One group could be subjected to limited parent-child interactions, such as simply reading to children and listening to children read. The other could be exposed to these two practices plus extended parent-child interactions as used in this study. This could test the effectiveness of limited as

opposed to extended interactions. Similarly, other specific practices included in this study could be tested for their individual effectiveness. Another prime example could be a study of the effects of imposed parental assistance programs as opposed to ones collaboratively developed.

Furthermore, similar research could be done where parents are trained to use the same program as volunteers in actual school settings to see if the same positive results occur. Better still, the study could be replicated with one group of parents trained to use the program in the home and another group trained to use it in the school. Comparison of results could indicate any advantages the natural, familiar, informal home environment may have over the more regulated and formal school setting. Comparing parent and teacher performance on such a program could also form the basis for further research.

Finally, because writing is an integral part of literacy, analogous studies could be done to discover what effects similar programs would have on writing development. Also, because this program seemed to have great potential for remedying literacy problems with respect to low ability students and boys, it is suggested that these possibilities be further explored.

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APPENDIX A

Coley's Point Primary School

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June 16, 1993

Dr. M. Trask, Superintendent,
Avalon North Integrated School Board
P.O. Box 500, Spaniard's Bay, NF.

Dear Dr. Trask:

This letter is to request your permission to carry out a 14 week study in reading at Coley's Point Primary School beginning in September of 1993.

This research will involve 14 students selected from the Grade Two level. It consists of a highly interactive reading program that will assist parents in using effective procedures and activities to help their children develop specific reading skills. The regular Grade Two program will not be interrupted except for periods of testing.

A series of meetings with parents will take place in September to provide an overview of the study and research findings in reading, followed by training sessions to ensure consistency and expertise in helping their children with reading. Evaluation of this program will be continuous by maintaining close contact with parents throughout the duration of the study.

I am presently working towards the completion of a Master's Degree in Reading at Memorial University. In order to complete this degree, it is necessary to carry out this research project. This proposal has been approved by my thesis Supervisor and it also meets the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. If you are willing to grant my request, would you please inform me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Belle S. Butt

Avalon North Integrated School Board

Telephone 785-7122
P. O. Box 500
Parmer's Bay, Newfoundland
A0A 3X0

Mr. F. Antle	
Board Chairperson	176
Maxwell Trask, B.A., M.Ed., Ph.D.	
District Superintendent	
E. C. Snow, Business Manager	

June 23, 1993

Mrs. Belle Butt
P.O. Box 552
Bay Roberts, NF
A0A 1G0

Dear Mrs. Butt:

RE: Your request of June 16, 1993

Permission is hereby granted for you to carry out the 14 week study at Coley's Point Primary School beginning in September, 1993.

This permission is granted with the understanding that a minimum of instructional time will be affected.

Best wishes with your study, and I trust that it will have the positive results which you anticipate.

Sincerely,

Maxwell Trask, Ph.D.
District Superintendent

MT:lec

cc: Ms. G. Taylor
Ms. M. Tucker

APPENDIX B

Coley's Point Primary School

178

June 16, 1993

Ms. Gloria Taylor, Principal
Coley's Point Primary School
P.O. Box 509, Bay Robert's, NF.

Dear Ms. Taylor:

This letter is to request your permission to carry out a 14 week study in reading at Coley's Point Primary School beginning in September of 1993.

This research will involve 14 students selected from the Grade Two level. It consists of a highly interactive reading program that will assist parents in using effective procedures and activities to help their children develop specific reading skills. The regular Grade Two program will not be interrupted except for periods of testing.

A series of meetings with parents will take place in September to provide an overview of the study and research findings in reading, followed by training sessions to ensure consistency and expertise in helping their children with reading. Evaluation of this program will be continuous by maintaining close contact with parents throughout the duration of the study.

I am presently working towards the completion of a Master's Degree in Reading at Memorial University. In order to complete this degree, it is necessary to carry out this research project. This proposal has been approved by my thesis Supervisor and it also meets the ethical guidelines of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. If you are willing to grant my request, would you please inform me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Belle S. Butt

Coley's Point Primary School

179

June 20, 1993

Ms. Belle Butt
Coley's Point Primary School
P.O. Box 509
Bay Roberts, NF
A0A 1G0

Dear Ms. Butt:

This letter is confirmation of permission to conduct your 14 week study at Coley's Point Primary School beginning in September of 1993. As a school we are very interested in reading development and the role of the home in supporting this process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further assistance or support. The staff is also very interested in your project and they will do their best to accommodate your needs.

We are very pleased that some of our students and parents will have the opportunity to be involved in this program. Interaction of this nature will be very valuable, especially for the children who will be receiving the intervention.

The school is available to you after hours should you require it. You are also very welcome to use our school-based literature and resources.

Good luck with your research and I look forward to sharing your results.

Sincerely yours,

Gloria Taylor
Principal

APPENDIX C

Coley's Point Primary School

181

September 7, 1993

Dear Parent,

During the 1993-94 school year, I will be doing testing with some children in Grade Two as part of my study for a Masters's Degree in Reading at Memorial University. This testing has the approval of the District Superintendent, the Principal of this school, my thesis Supervisor and the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee at the University.

This testing, which will take place in September, November, at the end of the study, and again in April of 1994, will test specific reading abilities. These tests will not have any effect on your child's placement or instruction throughout this school year. The results will be kept strictly confidential and in writing the final report, your child's name will not be used. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your child at any time.

Please do not discuss these tests with your child because it may build up an anxiety and dread for all testing situations throughout this year. Your child will perform better without this fear and nervousness.

To give me permission to work with your child, please sign below and return one copy. If you have any questions or concerns please call me at home, 786-6507.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Belle S. Butt

I _____ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child, _____ to take part in a study in reading undertaken by Belle Butt. I understand that participation is voluntary, my child may withdraw at any time, all information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date _____ Parent's/Guardian's Signature _____

APPENDIX D

Coley's Point Primary School

183

September 22, 1993

Dear Parent,

I am working on a research project toward the completion of a Master's Degree in Reading at Memorial University. It consists of a reading program which parents can use to help their children with reading at home. The School's Principal, the School District Superintendent, my research Supervisor and the Faculty of Education's Ethics Review Committee at Memorial University have approved this project.

Your child, _____ has been randomly selected to be involved in this program. If you wish your child to participate, one parent will have to work with him/her at home for the fourteen week duration of the study. It will involve helping your child with reading 5 nights per week for at least 15 minutes per night, and attending weekly meetings.

Most parents are already helping their children with reading at home; however, many are unsure about what to do and how to proceed. This program aims to assist parents with procedures and activities to help their children become better readers. The results of testing will be kept strictly confidential as already indicated to you. Also, participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

If you are willing to become involved with this project, please sign below and return one copy. If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at home, 786-6507.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Belle S. Butt

I _____ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child, _____ to take part in a study undertaken by Belle Butt which aims to assist parents with effective procedures and activities to help their children become better readers. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary, my child may withdraw at any time, all information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date _____ Parent's/Guardian's Signature _____

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX F

Examples of Questions to Ask Children Before, During and After Reading to and with Them

Before Reading

What do you think this book is about?

What do you think will happen in the story? Why?

Who do you think will be in the story?

Where do you think the story took place?

Do you think you will enjoy the story? Why?

During Reading

Which of our predictions were correct?

What problems will the people in the story have to face?

How do you think they will solve these problems?

What do you think will happen next? Why?

After Reading

Which of our predictions were correct?

What part of the story do you like best? Why?

Do you think what was done was right? Why?

What do you think will happen to the main character?

How are the people in the story like you? How are they different?

Is the world in which the story took place like ours?

How is it different?

Were you satisfied with the way the story ended? Why?

Could such things really happen?

Remember: Because the child is the one who is attempting to derive meaning from print during reading, it is crucial that the child be encouraged to ask questions and that these questions are answered.

APPENDIX G

Identification of Difficult Words: Interactive Strategies

Based on the way many of us were taught to read, we usually tell children to "sound out" unknown words. This tends to detract children from getting meaning from the story or book, the primary goal of reading. Attempts should be made not to let miscues interrupt meaning and cause the child to lose its thread. To produce independent readers who monitor and self-correct as they read, the following strategies are recommended before asking children to "sound it out".

(1) Silence

Deliberate silence for five to ten seconds is an effective one-to-one instructional technique. It provides time for children to question and think and gives them a chance to self-correct, and develop greater independence and self-confidence.

(2) Substituting

Advise, "Put in a word that would make sense there". Sometimes, children make substitutions without realizing it. It is important to help your child realize that it is not necessary to come to a standstill over unfamiliar words. Substituting other words that make sense is acceptable in order to continue the flow of reading. Asking children to use words they think would make sense in the sentence, also prompts them to really think about the meaning of what they have read. If children can offer a word that makes sense in the sentence, it shows that they have been thinking about the story as they read and have a good understanding of what the story is about.

(3) Rerunning

Request your child to, "Go back to the beginning of the sentence (or paragraph) and try it again".

(4) Blanking

Say, "Skip over the word and read to the end of the sentence (or paragraph). Now, what do you think the word is?"

(5) Recalling

Use comments like, "You had trouble with that word a few minutes ago. Can you remember?"

(6) Picture clues

Encourage your child to use the pictures to help figure out what the word could be.

When your child is having difficulty and trying to work out the trouble spots, it is important that you focus on what your child is doing well or attempting to do. Remain loving and supportive; do not get frustrated or criticize. Comments such as the following are suggested:

1. "Good for you. I like the way you tried to work that out."
2. "That was a good try. Yes, that word would make sense there."
3. "I like the way you looked at the picture to help yourself."
4. "I like the way you went back to the beginning of the sentence and tried it again. That's what good readers do."
5. "You are becoming a good reader. I'm proud of you."

Remember: if your child is having difficulty with many words on each page, this particular book is too difficult for the child to be reading independently. It is important that books selected for reading are at the child's interest and ability levels.

APPENDIX H

Inventory of Reading Attitude

Question	<u>Pretest</u>		<u>Follow-up Test</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you like to read before you go to bed?				
2. Do you like to read when mother and father are reading?				
3. Is reading your favourite subject at school?				
4. If you could do anything you wanted to do, would reading be one of the things you would chose to do?				
5. Do you think that you are a good reader for your age?				
6. Do you like to read aloud for other children at school?				
7. Do you like to read all kinds of books at school?				
8. Do you like to answer questions about things you have read?				
9. Do you like to talk about books you have read?				
10. Does reading make you feel good?				
11. Do you feel that reading time is the best part of the school day?				
12. Would you like to have more books to read?				

APPENDIX I

Parent Questionnaire

Please circle which is true for your child since this program began.

1. My child is
 - (a) reading more books.
 - (b) reading less books.
 - (c) reading about the same.

2. My child
 - (a) is more interested in reading.
 - (b) is less interested in reading.
 - (c) has about the same interest in reading.

3. My child reads
 - (a) the same kind of books.
 - (b) a variety of books.

4. My child spends
 - (a) more time reading.
 - (b) less time reading.
 - (c) about the same time reading.

5. Before reading a book my child
 - (a) likes to talk more about the cover, illustration and title.
 - (b) does not want to bother talking about the cover, illustration and title.
 - (c) has about the same interest in the cover, illustration and title.

6. When reading a book my child
 - (a) likes to make predictions on characters and events in the story.
 - (b) does not like to make predictions on characters and events in the story.
 - (c) has not changed in discussing characters and events.

7. After reading a book my child
 - (a) likes to discuss ideas in the book.
 - (b) does not like to discuss ideas in the book.
 - (c) has not changed in discussing ideas in the book.

8. When my child comes to an unknown word he/she
- (a) skips the word (or says blank) and reads on to the end of the sentence and then tries to think of a word that makes sense.
 - (b) stops and tries to sound out the word.
 - (c) spells the word.
 - (d) comes to a standstill.

Additional comments: _____

9. My child
- (a) understands books more.
 - (b) understands books less.
 - (c) has about the same understanding of what he/she reads.
10. My child has
- (a) less confidence for reading.
 - (b) more confidence for reading.
 - (c) about the same confidence for reading.
11. My child reads
- (a) with less expression.
 - (b) with more expression.
 - (c) with about the same expression.
12. Reading with my child is
- (a) less enjoyable.
 - (b) more enjoyable.
 - (c) about the same.
13. Please indicate the extent to which the availability and selection of books met the interests and reading level of your child.
- (a) poor
 - (b) fair
 - (c) good
 - (d) very good
 - (e) excellent

14. How often will you continue to help your child with reading?

- (a) once a week
- (b) twice a week
- (c) five nights a weeks
- (d) other (please indicate)_____

15. Please rate the effectiveness of this program.

- (a) poor
- (b) fair
- (c) good
- (d) very good
- (e) excellent

16. How do you feel this program could have been improved?



